



# THE BRAILLE MONITOR

Voice of the  
National Federation of the Blind

JULY - 1970

The National Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the blind—it is the blind speaking for themselves.

## THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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President: Kenneth Jernigan, 524 Fourth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

EDITOR: Perry Sundquist, 4651 Mead Avenue Sacramento, California 95822

Associate Editor: Hazel tenBroek, 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley, California 94708

News items should be sent to the Editor

Address changes should be sent to 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley, California 94708

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“I give, devise, and bequeath unto NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND, a District of Columbia non-profit corporation, the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_ (or, “ \_\_\_\_ percent of my net estate”, or “the following stocks and bonds: \_\_\_\_”) to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons and to be held and administered by direction of its Executive Committee ”

If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Berkeley Office for other suggested forms.

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## THE SEPARATE AGENCY FOR THE BLIND--WHY AND WHERE

by  
Kenneth Jernigan

A very disturbing trend is becoming increasingly apparent throughout the country with respect to the organizational and placement structure of programs for the blind—a trend which may be more ominous than anything we have seen in the past twenty years. It is nothing less than the total obliteration of separate agencies for the blind by combining them into larger catchall departments of government.

Despite the fact that NFB efforts in recent years have brought about the establishment of independent agencies for the blind in both Idaho and South Carolina (separating out the programs for the blind from State Welfare Departments) and that the organized blind in California and a few other states are moving vigorously to establish separate agencies, the tide is moving in the other direction and is gaining momentum. Every state and local affiliate (in fact, every member of our movement) should be alerted and should take vigorous action before it is too late. Regardless of how well established the separate agency for the blind is in a particular state or locality it may be absorbed into some large, super-agency purporting to serve all of the needs of the handicapped or disadvantaged before the local blind are even aware that the change is contemplated, if vigilance is not maintained and strong efforts made to resist the take over.

Historically, the first services to blind people in this country were educational. Toward the middle of the last century schools for the blind began to appear throughout the nation. For the most part

they were separate entities with the single purpose of educating blind children. In some instances, however, an attempt was made to combine them with schools for the deaf. Apparently the notion was that since both deaf children and blind children had sensory deprivations, their needs were similar and their education should be "integrated." The experiment was a failure. In reality the two groups had to be educated separately with different techniques to meet the two distinct problems. Although located on the same campus and combined under one administration, the two entities had to function separately.

Further, the blind necessarily got the short end of the stick. The deaf were always in the majority, and the orientation and planning were slanted toward the larger group. There are comparatively few such combined institutions left and almost nobody would advocate going back to the "integrated" setup.

In the early part of the present century many states established commissions for the blind. Profiting from the experience of the schools, these agencies dealt exclusively with the problem of blindness. Mostly they operated sheltered workshops and had very limited concepts concerning the potential and capacity of their clients for regular competitive activity. To the extent that these agencies failed, the problem was not in their structure but in goals and understanding.

In the early 1940's a new era came with the advent of retrolental fibroplasia.

Suddenly, thousands of premature babies were born blind. Regardless of philosophy, it would have been impossible for the residential schools to have accommodated all of these children. In addition, a new spirit was stirring in the land and the parents wanted something more than the isolated existence which the old-line programs had fostered.

There was a move to establish "integrated" classes in the public schools and separate agencies began to be in disfavor.

Many people confused the concept of integration of the blind person into society (which was certainly a good thing) with the concept of integrating services to blind persons, which was, of course, of more doubtful validity. The distinctive nature of the separate commissions began to blur. In some states services for the blind, while remaining a distinctive unit, were placed in the Department of Welfare, or the Department of Education, or Institutions. In others, rehabilitation of the blind was combined with general rehabilitation—sometimes retaining separate identity, sometimes not.

For the past couple of decades approximately three-fourths of the states have had separate agencies for the blind in one form or another—that is, the programs of rehabilitation for the blind have been administered separately from those for the remainder of the disabled. Relatively few of these separate agencies have had what one might regard as the ideal organizational structure. This would be all programs for the blind in the state located in one independent agency, not part of any other department of government but answerable directly to the Governor and Legislature, with a lay board consisting of at least

some representation from the blind themselves.

Until the mid-1960's the situation was fairly static. Then, through efforts of the NFB, Idaho and South Carolina established separate commissions for the blind, both geared to provide the total range of services needed and thoroughly imbued with a progressive, vigorous philosophy. Other states followed this lead and introduced legislation to accomplish the same purpose. A definite trend became apparent.

By 1969, however, matters had completely changed. Programs for the blind began to be caught up in the growing national avalanche of "concern for the disadvantaged." Actually, four recent phenomena combined to create the problem.

1. All state governments are now being told that they need to "reorganize" and make their operations more efficient. What usually happens is that the Legislature appropriates several hundred thousand dollars to conduct a study. A number of "consulting firms" are waiting in the wings to do the job. In most cases their recommendations could be written without ever sending a single man into the state since the same plan always emerges, thus doubtless reducing the costs and raising the profits.

The recommended patterns for reorganization for each state are so similar as to imply collusion, not corroboration. In almost every case there is an attempt to combine all agencies and departments into about a dozen super-departments, the heads of which hold cabinet rank and are responsible to the Governor. In this setup everything with the same name tends to

get lumped into the same spot regardless of whether it has any similarity. Rehabilitation of the blind (and sometimes other services) tends to become part of the general rehabilitation agency, with ever-diminishing emphasis and identity. The rehabilitation agency, in turn, tends to become part of a large conglomerate such as: "The Department of Social Services," "The Department of Health and Welfare," or "The Department of Human Resources." One looks at these "new" plans and almost expects to see the old Nineteenth Century recommendation of combining the education of the blind and the deaf into a single institution.

2. In 1967 the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare reorganized. Whether this came about because of internal departmental politics or some genuine belief that a constructive purpose was being served, one cannot say. However, rehabilitation, public assistance, and a variety of other activities were combined into what was called "Social and Rehabilitation Services." Welfare had been falling into disfavor but rehabilitation seemed to be fairly high on everybody's list. This made some people wonder why rehabilitation would be willing to combine with welfare at the Federal level. The new "Social and Rehabilitation Services" was headed by Miss Mary Switzer, the long time Director of Rehabilitation. Soon after the reorganization occurred, a number of states felt that Federal officials were tending to give weight to efforts to reorganize state programs along similar lines. Whether or not this feeling was accurate, there can be no doubt that the Federal example had influence—if in no other way, but the very fact of its existence.

As a part of the Federal reorganiza-

tion there came an ever increasing emphasis on "coordination of all services to people." There was much talk of "efficient use of human resources." This inevitably led to a de-emphasis of separate agencies and a pulling together of all functions and activities into giant departments at the state level.

3. In 1965 Congress amended the Vocational Rehabilitation Act to provide, among other things, that each state would be given up to \$100,000 to develop a comprehensive state-wide plan for rehabilitation, whereby all eligible disabled persons would be receiving services by 1975. The troubles, needs, and hopes of all of the "disadvantaged" were viewed as a single problem to be solved by one "comprehensive state-wide plan"—by 1975. The Governor of each state was to designate an agency or organization to make the study and fashion the "plan." In some instances the Governor chose an existing entity, and in some he created a special organization, but in almost all, the influence of the general rehabilitation agency was paramount. Since the rehabilitation agencies themselves were the governmental units primarily concerned with the problem and since (in those states having separate agencies for the blind) the general agencies dealt with the larger numbers and the broader categories, this is not surprising.

In a handful of cases, the agencies for the blind substantially influenced the "plan," and in isolated instances the organized blind were heard. By and large, however, the trend was otherwise. Mostly the blind seemed unaware of the far reaching significance of what was occurring and did not demand or get seats on the state policy boards. As the plans began to come into Washington in 1967 and 1968 there was



a noticeable trend to recommend that services to the blind, as well as other smaller programs, be submerged into general rehabilitation, or even larger super-departments. The full impact of these "comprehensive state plans" is only now beginning to be felt throughout the country and is still another stream feeding the growing flood.

4. In the early 1960's the "Commission on Standards and Accreditation of Services for the Blind" (COMSTAC) was formed. In 1966 its successor agency "NAC" (The National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped) came into being. Still largely financed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the American Foundation for the Blind, NAC tends to emphasize a type of so-called "professionalism" and a "methodology and agency structure" which many people feel reinforces the three phenomena already discussed, thus contributing to the fragmentation of services for the blind. It is probably easier, for instance, for a library for the blind to meet the NAC "standards" if it is part of a state library as opposed to being part of an agency for the blind. One must hasten to add that the NAC standards do not explicitly make such a requirement and that the organization strongly disavows any intention to compel stifling uniformity. The COMSTAC NAC influence has probably been less important—at least to the present time—in creating the new trend with respect to services for the blind than the three phenomena already discussed. Still, it has done its bit.

Although these four things are probably paramount, there are many other influences which help to strengthen the pat-

tern that is now emerging. The very fact of the growing bigness and complexity of our society tends to make for bigness and complexity in government. The new technology, the giant computers, the data retrieval, and the increasing speed of communication, plus the seemingly irresistible human urge to use these things now that we have them (the feeling as Simon & Garfunkel put it, that "We Need to Know a Little Bit About You for Our Files")—all of this doubtless plays its part.

Regardless of what the current trend may be, the reasons for a separate independent agency for the blind are as valid and compelling now as they have always been. Rehabilitation of the blind, for instance, has more in common with home teaching or library services for the blind than it does with rehabilitation of other disabled groups or the socially disadvantaged. Likewise, library services for the blind logically have close links with the rehabilitation of the blind and education of blind children—much more so than with library services for the general public. There is, indeed, a need for coordination and integration of services but terminology should not be confused with reality. If, for instance a state has a Supervisor of Highway Construction, a Supervisor of Elementary Education, a Supervisor of Pest Control, and a Supervisor of Health and Accident Insurance, it does not follow that integration and coordination are achieved by creating a Department of Supervisors and lumping all of these people and functions together. Nor is any real integration or coordination achieved by establishing in a state a Department of Health and Highways. Health is one function and Highways another, and they cannot meaningfully be integrated. If such a department is established all that can be



accomplished is to superimpose an administrative hierarchy on the two departments, which will still remain separate functions—whether they be called departments, divisions, bureaus or what not. In fact, the administrative hierarchy will be detrimental and will cause inefficiency in such a situation.

Fragmentation is increased, rather than helped, by putting all of the services for the blind into a division of a super-department. What is needed is common sense, rather than theory and neatness of organizational chart. The services for the blind complement each other and form one unique entity. They are only very slightly and incidentally related to services for other handicapped or disadvantaged groups, despite the similarity of terminology. The people who administer services for the blind should be able to administer the entire package and should not be distracted by other duties. They should not be responsible to people who have other program interests and who may, therefore, subordinate the needs of programs for the blind to other considerations. At the same time the professional administrator should be responsible to some authority as a check and balance and a testing ground for his judgment. This should be a lay board, preferably one containing a number of blind persons themselves—people who know firsthand what the services are like. If the administrator of programs for the blind is responsible to the head of a super-agency or directly to the Governor he is not really responsible to anyone, for these people are not knowledgeable and are likely to be extremely busy with other matters. Thus an independent commission for the blind administering all state services for the blind and visually handicapped would seem best to meet the requirements

for a good program. It is, of course, possible to have an inefficient commission, just as it is possible to have an inefficient program under any other type of administration. This all depends on the caliber of the people who do the administering. However, if all other things are equal, a commission would seem to afford the best organizational structure. It is certainly not the only structure for good programs. The important thing would seem to be to have an independent, identifiable unit of government administering as much of the total package as possible.

With all of this in mind the occurrences of the past two years are extremely disturbing. In 1969, Florida's separate agency was abolished, and its functions were absorbed into a larger department. The same thing occurred in Maine.

In Wisconsin the situation was somewhat different but, perhaps, even more ominous. First, the separate agency for the blind was transferred from the Welfare Department to the general rehabilitation agency. The blind were assured that they had nothing to fear since all that was being changed was the administrative location. Several months later the head of the services for the blind was informed that beginning July 1, 1970, he would no longer have any administrative responsibility. Counselors for the blind throughout the state would now be fully integrated into the district offices and would be responsible to the same local supervisors as other counselors. The former head of services for the blind would now become merely a consultant. If the situation had been thoroughly understood and vigorously resisted when the original transfer from welfare was made, perhaps specialized and meaningful services for the blind of Wisconsin

could have been saved, but at this stage it may well be too late.

Early in 1970, Ohio took the first step on the same road. The familiar bill was introduced and passed, putting services for the blind under general rehabilitation. The usual assurances were also given (in the law itself) that this was only an administrative change for efficiency of government and that specialized services for the blind would continue unimpaired. It can only be hoped that the Wisconsin experience will not be repeated.

Delaware could almost be used as a model for what is happening throughout the country. The state has had an independent commission for the blind for many years, answerable only to the Governor and the Legislature. Programs for the blind have been a single entity, and (even though the blind have often felt that services were inadequate) responsibility for problems could be focused and interaction with administrators achieved. Each year the blind had the opportunity to try to get some of their own representatives on the commission's board. The full time of administrators and staff was devoted to affairs of the blind.

Such is the case no more. Delaware no longer has an independent commission, and the blind of the state are likely to have fewer opportunities as a result. On March 16, 1970, Governor Russell Peterson signed the State Reorganization Bill, which he had made a campaign issue and which he pushed through the Legislature. It creates the cabinet form of state administration.

The previously autonomous Commission for the Blind became the Council for

the Blind, one of four Councils in the Division of Social Services of the Department of Health and Welfare. Formerly the members of the Commission had full administrative authority to run the Commission for the Blind. Under the new setup, the former Commissioners are mere advisors with only the authority to recommend. The Director of the Council for the Blind now reports to the Chief of the Division of Social Services who in turn reports to the Director of the Department of Health and Welfare.

Under the reorganization, the departmental secretary or director is given the authority, with the written approval of the Governor, to fragment and tear asunder the existing administrative entities of his Department. This means that he could, even without a hearing, transfer Aid to the Blind administration, let us say, to the Council on Public Assistance; vocational rehabilitation for the blind to general rehabilitation; talking book machine distribution to the library, etc.

Already the administrator of the Council for the Blind is encountering great difficulty in obtaining approval for any new personnel or even in replacing present personnel when vacancies occur. Personnel and fiscal matters have been removed from the Council and turned over to state-wide administrative agencies handling these matters for all state departments. The blind of the state and officials of the program fear the worst--if not from this Governor, then from his successor.

The latest victim is Vermont. The state Legislature has passed a bill establishing a "Human Services Agency." Under this agency will be a new Department of Rehabilitation, designated as the sole State

agency, which will administer the general vocational rehabilitation program, all the service programs for the blind which were in the Division for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, and the programs carried out by the Alcoholic and Drug Boards. The effective date of the legislation is January 10, 1971.

South Dakota had a recent narrow escape. There was a strong move to abolish its independent agency for the blind. The attempt failed but will doubtless be made again in the next Legislature. The Oregon Commission is also under attack and may fall if strong support is not organized.

In this new crisis which now faces the blind and their programs, the first requirement is information and perspective. It is essential that the organizations of the blind and the friends of the blind understand what is happening and where the trend is leading. There is too often the tendency to view changes in a given state as an isolated instance instead of part of a total pattern.

There is also the need to close ranks and stand together. Even if the separate agency in a particular state has not provided good service, the answer is not destruction but reform. Once the agency is absorbed into the super-department, the blind will get a smaller percentage of the tax dollar, less specialized know-how, and less flexibility to meet their unique problems.

Over the years work with the blind in this country has made notable achievements. With all of its faults and shortcomings it has brought improvement to the lives of tens of thousands of blind persons. As the blind themselves grow stronger in their organizations, there is every reason to believe that the various agencies will become increasingly effective in their performance and responsive in their behavior. Whatever else occurs, the blind cannot and must not permit the wholesale destruction of their agencies. In the name of trash burning, arson must not be committed, nor must vandalism be sanctioned in the name of reform.

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#### MANAGEMENT AGAIN DEFEATS BENEFITS FOR SHELTERED SHOP EMPLOYEES

"It could result in a major increase in cost to local Goodwill Industries."

This was the key and under-lined comment in a memo sent by the Washington headquarters of Goodwill Industries of America to officials of local Goodwill sheltered workshops throughout the nation.

The memo was for the purpose of

making known that H. R. 14705, passed by the House of Representatives, had been amended in the Senate Finance Committee so as to provide the dollar protection of unemployment compensation for handicapped persons remuneratively employed in sheltered workshops.

On February 18, John Nagle, Chief of the NFB Washington Office, testified

of the Blind wished to achieve two goals: the immediate goal was to obtain income for these workers when jobs in the shops run out and the workers are without earnings. But the Federation's long range goal was that of compelling sheltered shop management to operate their shops more efficiently, to make greater efforts to procure long-term sub-contract work, to modernize the kinds of work done from the hand-skilled or handicraft kinds to machine operations and assembly-line production. The organized blind hoped not that sheltered shop workers would be financially better off when unemployed, but that the evil of far too frequent unemployment might be eliminated from their lives, and that a greater and more regular continuity of employment would result as a betterment in their lives.

The action of the Goodwill Industries and other sheltered shop management people in killing the unemployment compensation for handicapped workers in sheltered workshops amendment reaffirms that which all Federationists, which all handicapped people, already so well know—that sheltered shop management, that social welfare service-providing agencies and organizations, are primarily concerned

with their agencies and institutions, and only secondarily concerned with the well-being of the handicapped people they profess to serve.

The Hartke-Fannin amendment to H. R. 14705 provided benefits, greatly needed benefits, for handicapped people who, far too often, must work in sheltered employment because open industry employers will not hire them—and the National Federation of the Blind tried to secure these benefits for the handicapped workers. The Goodwill Industries management, however, could only see the Hartke-Fannin amendment as an added burden on the shops, an added burden on themselves, and so they opposed and successfully defeated the amendment.

The bitter result of this Goodwill lobbying success story is this: in the future, when there are no jobs to be done in a sheltered workshop and workers are laid off, the physically fit management personnel will be able to draw weekly unemployment compensation checks.

The handicapped workers in the shops will have to apply to welfare for relief.

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## A BUSY WEEKEND IN D.C.

by  
Jim Doherty

[Editor's Note: *The Washington Post* story follows Mr. Doherty's account.]

"A little past noon last Friday [May 15], a group of sign-carrying citizens gathered to march." Thus begins a *Washington*

*Post* account of the first event in the Capital Chapter's convention weekend. The event was a parade to mark the opening of

National White Cane Week. About two dozen members and friends (both blind and sighted) participated. The placards bore such slogans as: "The white cane equals independence" and "The white cane: symbol of ability!" Conspicuous on each were the chapter name and the National Federation symbol. The purpose of the parade was to draw attention to the positive message of White Cane Week and to publicize the Federation. The number of spectators and the amount of literature distributed would indicate that both objectives were achieved.

The convention next day was the real focal point of the weekend's activities. From 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., an audience of about seventy-five persons heard and questioned speakers representing agencies and services in the District of Columbia. Jim Omvig, of the Iowa Commission, ably filled in for Dr. Jernigan as the banquet speaker.

The information flow was not all in one direction, however. The Federationists made it very clear to the agency people just what existing practices were acceptable or even praiseworthy and, at the same time, emphatically pointed out deficiencies and necessary improvements.

Of course, not every minute of the day was devoted to work. The awarding of door prizes, a cocktail hour and the lunch hour provided both diversion and time to get better acquainted with the guests. Some of these—notably the representatives of special education and a new V.R. evaluation center—were extremely interested in joining with the Capital Chapter in upgrading their programs.

This was the first local convention in the Capital Chapter's ten-year history. Before it was concluded, some members were already talking about things to be included in next year's plans.

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## BLIND POWER

Last Friday, a little past noon at the corner of 14th and K Streets, Northwest, a group of about twenty poster-and-sign-carrying citizens waited to march along the sidewalk. They attracted plenty of attention, as anybody with a sign in his hand does these days. No police were present, however, or National Guardsmen or marshals. This confused many approaching onlookers; but on reading the posters, most either smiled or nodded approval. The marchers were blind people, members of the Capital Chapter of the National

Federation of the Blind, and their posters carried this information.

"It's not really a march," said Jim Doherty, a Washington public relations man blind since birth, who is fluent in Russian. "We're parading. This is the first day of National White Cane Week (May 15-21) and we feel like celebrating, so here we are.") Among the group were men and women who enjoy successful careers as lawyers, musicians, librarians, computer programmers, medical transcribers.



Most blind people are tired of stories about how they overcome the handicap of blindness. "That's a fine personal achievement," said Mrs. John F. Nagle, who heads the local chapter of the NFB, "but the blind as a group still have other handicaps to overcome. We recently put before the city council a measure called the Model White Cane Law. If passed, it will prohibit discrimination, for reasons of blindness or other physical impairment, in the areas of

employment, housing, public transportation and public facilities. Independence is the goal every blind person is striving for. We'll have an easier time reaching that goal if we are not discriminated against."

Many passers-by asked for literature and whether non-blind people could join the Federation. "They can," said Jim Doherty. "Blind people aren't the only ones with visions for the future."

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### HE HAS MASTER'S DEGREE BUT NO JOB

by

Karen Holzmeister

[ Reprinted from the Hayward (California) *Daily Review* ]

The applause was extended and enthusiastic for Harry Cordellos when he walked across the stage at California State College, Hayward to receive his master's degree in physical education. And so far, the applause is all that Cordellos has to show for completing his graduate work. His master's degree has qualified him only for the ranks of the unemployed.

Cordellos is blind and he has been for about 16 years, since he was in his teens. He was born with glaucoma, a disease of the eye, which could not be improved by surgery and led to complete blindness.

Acquiring his master's degree meant thousands of hours of work on his part and by those at the college who helped him. Right now, he is finding that his hard-won sheepskin is not worth the paper it is printed on. Very simply, he can't get a

job. Along with the master's degree, the 32-year-old Cordellos acquired a junior college teaching credential. He has applied at about a dozen Bay Area junior colleges, in addition to numerous public and private organizations. They have told him, he says, "Come back when you have paid, professional experience."

"It's a vicious circle," he said. "If you have experience, and it must be an actual paid job to qualify under civil service rules, then you'll be considered. But no one will give you that first position to start the ball rolling."

No one includes the college that has helped him so much up to this point, he adds.

Cordellos has mastered sports of virtually every description. He can golf, swim

and dive, and with a partner run long distance races. He paddles a canoe and water skis. He has instructed informally in all of these. He operates a camera and commutes daily by bus from San Francisco.

On a volunteer basis for the last two years, he has lectured to, and worked with, handicapped students in a Saturday workshop at Cal State, and now he teaches an extension course in the use of power tools to students who can see.

Dr. Richard Rivenes of the physical education department, who advised Cordellos on his master's thesis, said Harry is "dedicated to solving the problem of handicapped people who don't participate in activities. He helps out those pushed aside who might miss the enjoyment of games and activities. And he has volunteered for the Saturday lab—he has done things we would normally have paid for.

"Here is a unique man and person. It's sad if society can't absorb him."

But every job that has potentially existed on the campus for Cordellos has fallen through, including a natural, as director of handicapped services, which was not funded this year by the state. "I was never allowed to apply for a job while doing my master's degree and to this day, Dr. Morford still says he will never put a blind person in charge of an activity class," Cordellos said.

"I always believed that professional judgment was based on facts. The facts are simply that I have already worked with patients at a veterans' hospital in golf, bowling and swimming and have worked at Cal State in the adapted P.E. program for handicapped children."

As for accidents—which he claims is one of Morford's concerns—Cordellos has had none; and he said that "the blind teacher who would ever accept a job for his own betterment at the expense of the safety of his class would have to be a selfish egotist . . . All of my students operate power tools and, I might add, blindfolded. We all have all our fingers, and I feel everyone can better appreciate the problems of the blind because of it."

Morford declined to answer when asked if Cordellos was being passed over for employment because of his blindness. But the department chairman did say he has two considerations in hiring a person: "the man's professional qualifications 'and, in the case of safety, if anything should happen, it would all come back to me.'

"People, in thinking 'What a shame Harry can't get a job,' often let their emotions overrule their judgment. He can apply for a position like anyone else, and I will judge his qualifications like anyone else."

"If someone with his same educational background applies but with more experience, whom should we take on here? We have three full-time positions budgeted for next year and don't want to break them into part-time positions."

So Cordellos, while going for daily interviews throughout the Bay Area, still continues working in volunteer programs.

"Only eight students received a master's of science degree in the P.E. department in three years," he said. "I was one of the first three or four, in a department whose image is very academic and tough.



"Being blind may put two strikes against me, but though a few people may

have already called me out, I think I can still get on base and score."

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## SEMINAR IN DES MOINES

by  
Mary Medema

April 17th and 18th were two extremely busy days at the Iowa Commission for the Blind. They were filled with meetings, tours, a seminar and general exchange of ideas on Federationism between members of two state affiliates.

Early Friday morning students from the Commission's Orientation Center met eleven members of the Illinois Congress of the Blind at the Des Moines bus depot, and escorted them to the Commission building. They had come for two days of meetings to learn more about the Commission's program, and to find ways of strengthening the Federation in their own state. During the day they observed Orientation classes, took a tour of the library, met with Manuel Urena, Assistant Director in charge of Orientation, and with Kenneth Jernigan.

At noon Commission students and visitors formed small groups, each visiting one of the cafeterias in the downtown area, run by former Commission clients. Here they were able to observe and discuss one of the important aspects of employment opportunities for blind Iowans. When the afternoon meetings were over, everyone gathered on the roof of the Commission for a cook-out. Commission stu-

dents are always eager to show visitors the phenomenon of grilling meat out of doors, and eating on a spacious picnic table, high above downtown Des Moines.

After the visitors had finished their tour of the building in the evening, they were free to mingle with the students, and meet representatives of various chapters of the Iowa Association of the Blind who were arriving for a seminar the next day. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss achievements and problems of the I.A.B., to encourage recruitment of new members, and to take a look at where the Federation is going on a national level. Rami Rabby, President of the Illinois Congress of the Blind, also arrived that evening.

Saturday morning began with an excellent breakfast prepared by Harold Beattie, manager of the Commission Grill. At nine o'clock everyone gathered in the Rehabilitation area of the Commission. Mr. Jernigan began the seminar with an informative and inspiring talk on issues currently facing the I.A.B. as well as the Federation nationally. The morning session came to a close after a discussion of welfare payments to blind persons by John Taylor, Assistant Director in charge of Field Operations.

In the afternoon Manuel Urena spoke about chapter organization and fundraising. Chapter representatives from Iowa raised questions about activities and projects in their own communities. The visitors from Illinois also commented on what they were doing in their state. Miss Olesen, Assistant Librarian at the Commission, gave a brief talk concerning library services, after which John Taylor discussed rehabilitation. The afternoon session ended following a discussion of Orientation, lead by Manuel Urena, and the raising of general questions.

The day's activities came to a climax

with the meeting of the Des Moines Association of the Blind. The regular membership was augmented by many visitors who were introduced and made welcome. After the meeting, the I.A.B. visitors began to go home, and the Illinoisans caught a midnight bus.

Everyone agreed that the weekend had been exciting and profitable. Federationists shared successes and problems; they came away with new ideas for growth and accomplishment; the members of two state affiliates were brought closer together to strengthen the spirit and purpose of the National Federation of the Blind.

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## DELAWARE CONVENTION

by  
Joseph Spence

On April 18th the Delaware Federation of the Blind held its first annual convention at St. Andrew's Parish House in downtown Wilmington. The Delaware Federation has tripled its membership in the fifteen months since it was formed: membership now stands at ninety-five.

Shortly after 9:00 A.M., on a beautiful spring day, President Joseph Spence called the meeting to order. In the absence of the Reverend Otis Herring who was to give the invocation, a moment of silent prayer was observed, after which members and friends were welcomed to the morning session.

A brief business meeting was held with committee reports and the election

of two board members. Joanna Spence was re-elected for a two-year term; and William Driver, a masseur with the local YMCA health club, was elected to fill the position of Donald Smith on the board.

Mr. Howard T. Jones, Executive Director of the Delaware Commission for the Blind, spoke on the history of services for the blind in Delaware, bringing up to date the present standing of the Delaware Commission for the Blind which will now be called the Council on the Blind, a division of the Health and Social Welfare Department of the Delaware new cabinet type of government. Mr. Jones stressed some of the shortcomings of this type organization.

Mrs. Lillian Maden, in charge of Aid to the Blind under the Delaware Commission, gave a very good account of what standards the Commission sets in this department. The average grant in Delaware is \$101.00, the maximum is \$125.00, except in cases of special need.

Mr. Norman Balot, Deputy Director of the Delaware Commission, and head of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, gave the latest figures on placement:

Competitive employment . . . . .	16
Vending Stands . . . . .	4
Sheltered shop . . . . .	5
Homemakers . . . . .	8
Self-employed . . . . .	2
Total . . . . .	35

Mr. Perry Sundquist, editor of *The Braille Monitor* and NFB board member, wound up the morning session with an analysis of the services for the blind in Delaware. Perry recommended to the Delaware group some ultimate goals which would strengthen the programs to meet the needs of the blind citizens of Delaware. He also suggested that an escalator clause be added to the Delaware Aid Law to cover the cost of living

After a fine luncheon served in the dining room of the Parish House, the afternoon session got under way. Mr. Harry Undy of the Maryland Workshop for the Blind, Mr. George Kittell of the Delaware County Association of the Blind, and Mr. Harry Marshall of the Delaware Commission Workshop, gave talks on their respective workshops followed by a question and answer period which proved quite interesting.

Mr. Art Seigle, vending stand operator from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Mr. William Thompson, vending stand operator from Baltimore, Maryland, and Mr. Joseph Hubbard, manager of the Business Enterprises program under the Delaware Commission for the Blind, provided a lively discussion on the vending stand programs. Delaware has a completely controlled program wherein the operator is supervised and controlled completely by the Commission. He is entitled to two to four weeks' paid vacation, five days sick leave and a non-contributory state pension. John Nagle pointed out that the program paid more money last year to its sighted help than it did to the blind operators. Mr. Hubbard stated that there were more sighted employees in some stands than operators. Art Seigle further pointed out that he operated a stand with four or five employees but he still made more than they made put together.

John Nagle of the Washington office of NFB gave a legislative report and climaxed the day with an inspiring address at the evening banquet.

Along with John Nagle and Perry Sundquist, Mr. Ned Graham of the NFB Executive Committee and Mr. William Thompson, President of the Greater Baltimore Chapter, were also present.

Mr. Ray Munis, Second Vice-president, and Mr. Edward Stokes, First Vice-president, moderated the morning and afternoon sessions respectively. Sixty-seven were registered in attendance for this first convention of the First State.

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## DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR BLIND PEOPLE

[Editor's Note: The Following material is reprinted from a pamphlet recently issued by the Bureau of Disability Insurance, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.]

### *Who Can Get Disability Benefits:*

The social security program provides disability protection in three different situations. Monthly benefits can be paid to:

*A disabled worker* under 65 and his family if he has worked long enough and recently enough under social security. To have disability protection, most workers need social security work credit for 5 of the 10 years preceding the onset of disability. For the worker who becomes disabled before 31, the requirement ranges down with the age to as little as 1½ years.

*A person continuously disabled since childhood* (before 18), when his parent gets social security retirement or disability benefits or dies. These "childhood disability" payments can continue as long as the person remains disabled. He does not need to have worked under social security himself.

*A disabled widow, 50 to 60*, if her deceased husband was covered under social security. This also applies to disabled dependent widowers, 50 to 62, and to certain disabled surviving divorced wives, 50 to 60. The benefits are permanently reduced, with the amount of the reduction depending on the age at which benefits start.

Disabled widows and dependent widowers need not have worked under social

security themselves. They can be eligible only if the disability occurs before or within 7 years after the spouse's death or, in the case of a widowed mother, before or within 7 years after her mother's benefits stop.

### *Disability Benefits for the Blind*

Professional people who work with the blind play an important role in shaping the social security disability program.

Program provisions were developed with the advice of rehabilitation counselors, social workers, representatives of blind service organizations, and other professionals with first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by people with serious visual impairments. Members of these professions are regularly consulted on policies and procedures for measuring work potential and performance and for encouraging rehabilitation.

About 35,000 persons disabled by blindness--and 20,000 of their dependents--now receive approximately \$50 million a year in disability payments. The Social Security Administration believes that others may be missing out on payments because they do not know of changes in the law which have liberalized the disability program in recent years. Your help in spreading the word about the disability provisions in general will be greatly appreciated.

To give you a better understanding of how the program works, and how blind people may benefit from it, here are answers to some questions that are frequently asked.

*What does "disability" mean?*

For social security purposes, "disability" means the inability to work because of (1) a severe physical or mental impairment that has lasted (or is expected to last) at least 12 months, or to result in death; or (2) "blindness." "Blindness" is defined in the social security law as either central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of corrective lenses, or visual field reduction to 20 degrees or less.

*How about a worker who meets the statutory test of blindness? What special consideration does he get?*

Several special provisions apply to a worker whose sight is poor enough to meet the statutory definition described above.

For example, if such a person has worked long enough and recently enough under social security, he is eligible for a disability "freeze" even if he is actually working. Under the "freeze," years in which he has low earnings (or no earnings) because of disability will not reduce the amount of his future benefits, which are figured from his average earnings.

A person 55 to 65 who meets the test of blindness and who has worked long enough and recently enough under social security can get cash disability benefits if he is unable to perform work requiring skills or abilities comparable to the work

he did regularly before he reached 55 or became blind, whichever is later. (Benefits will not be paid, however, for any month in which he *actually* performs substantial gainful work.)

A blind worker under 55 can become entitled to cash benefits only if he is unable to engage in *any* substantial gainful work

*Where do I send a person with a severe visual impairment to ask about disability benefits?*

Refer him to his social security office. If he cannot get there because he is in a hospital or is unable to leave his home, a representative from the office can arrange to visit him.

*How much will the benefits be?*

Benefits can amount to as much as \$204 monthly for a disabled worker and up to \$415.20 a month for a family. The amount depends on the worker's average earnings under social security over a period of years.

*When can benefit payment begin?*

Payments to a disabled worker and his family or to a disabled widow or widower generally cannot begin until after a waiting period of 6 full months of disability. A son or daughter disabled in childhood may be eligible for benefits as soon as one of his parents begins getting retirement or disability benefits, or dies, and has enough social security credit to be insured.

If a person has been disabled for more than 7 months before he applies,



some benefits may be payable for months before the application was made. It is important to apply soon after the disability starts because back payments are limited to the 12 months preceding the date of application.

*Suppose a person blinded in an industrial accident is receiving workmen's compensation benefits and becomes eligible for social security disability benefits. Can he get both?*

He can, but the total benefits he and his family get under both programs may not exceed 80 percent of his average monthly earnings before he became disabled. This means the average of *all* his earnings, not just those covered by social security. The amount of his social security benefit may be reduced whenever necessary to keep within this limitation. But the adjusted combined benefit will always be at least as much as the social security payments alone.

*If a person who has retired on reduced social security benefits becomes blind, would it pay him to switch to disability benefits?*

If he has the necessary work credits and is still under 65 after the 6-month waiting period, it may be to his advantage to change to disability benefits. The social security representative can explain this in more detail.

*Under what circumstances do disability benefits stop?*

Benefits are stopped if a beneficiary shows he is able to do substantial gainful work and is, therefore, no longer disabled within the meaning of the law. Also, bene-

fits will stop if the beneficiary recovers medically so he is no longer unable to work. Benefits to a dependent generally stop when she or he marries. There are, however, some exceptions to this.

*Suppose a blind beneficiary goes back to work; how can you tell if his effort will be successful?*

It is difficult to predict whether any disabled person (including the blind) will be able to continue working for any length of time. Therefore, the decision as to whether a beneficiary's work is substantial and gainful is usually put off until he has worked in at least 9 separate months (not necessarily consecutive). Meanwhile, his benefits continue.

This 9-month deferment is known as the "trial work period." It gives the beneficiary a chance to fully test his ability to work, confident that his disability payments will continue without interruption while he works.

*Are benefits stopped at the end of the trial work period?*

Only if the work the beneficiary is doing shows he has regained his ability to do substantial gainful work despite his impairment. Even then, benefits are continued for 3 additional months in order to help him adjust to being self-supporting again. (A beneficiary who is not working but recovers medically also gets 3 additional months of benefits—the month of recovery and 2 additional ones.)

If the beneficiary is still not able to perform substantial gainful work at the end of his trial work period, benefits are continued.

*What factors are considered in deciding if a blind person's work is substantial and gainful?*

All the pertinent facts about his job are considered in making this decision—his skills, experience, responsibility, hours, productivity, and pay. The amount of his pay is perhaps the best gauge of how substantial his work is. For example, if a person's average pay is over \$140 a month (changed recently from \$125), his work would usually be considered substantial and gainful.

*What if a person's average monthly pay is over \$140, but a portion is really unearned—such as a subsidy added to help him meet living expenses?*

The unearned portion is not counted in deciding if he is doing substantial gainful work. All that counts is the pay he earns through his own efforts. By the same token, if it is necessary for someone to help him with his job, consideration is given to the value of this help in figuring actual earnings.

*Does an average monthly pay of \$140 or less always mean that benefits continue?*

Not always. Despite such earnings, a person may be considered able to do substantial gainful work if he shows he can do more work than he is actually doing or if he already does work of about the same amount and quality as non-disabled workers in his community who do similar work for a living.

*Are the same earnings guides used to evaluate the work activity of beneficiaries employed in sheltered workshops?*

There is one slight variation. A worker in a sheltered workshop whose pay is \$140 a month or less is considered not to be doing substantial gainful work. It is not necessary to compare his work with that done by non-disabled people in the community.

*How is substantial gainful work evaluated for a person who is self-employed?*

About the same way the work of a salaried person is evaluated. All the pertinent facts about his work are considered—his skills, experience, responsibilities, hours, productivity, and earnings.

Business income is influenced by economic conditions, the value of unpaid services of family members, etc. More emphasis is therefore placed on the extent of the activities performed in connection with the business, and less placed on the amount of net earnings.

*Suppose a blind beneficiary who returns to work or recovers becomes disabled again and is again eligible for benefits; do his benefits start, as before, with his 7th month of disability?*

If he again becomes disabled within 5 years (7 years for widows and widowers), his benefits can start again with the first full month of disability. He does not have to go through a "waiting period" as he did the first time.

*What is done for a blind claimant in the way of rehabilitation?*

At the time a decision is made on his disability claim, the applicant is also considered for possible services by his State vocational rehabilitation agency. If he is



considered to have good rehabilitation potential, he may be offered services by the agency.

Such services include counseling, teaching of new employment skills, and job placement. These services are generally financed from State-Federal appropriations.

*Does social security help finance the rehabilitation of beneficiaries?*

Yes. The Social Security Act permits money to be made available to State vocational rehabilitation agencies from social security trust funds to finance the rehabilitation of persons receiving disability bene-

fits. In any given year, the maximum amount allocated nationally for this purpose is equal to 1 percent of the total amount paid in social security disability benefits in the previous year. Currently, this amounts to nearly \$20 million a year, but the figure will go up as total benefits paid increase.

*Can a blind claimant be found disabled even if he is a good rehabilitation prospect?*

Yes. The decision that a claimant is disabled is based on his *present* capacity to work, rather than the ability he may attain after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

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## GIRL IN CAMBRIDGE SUCCESSFULLY TEACHING

by  
Muriel Cohen

[Editor's Note: The following story is reprinted from the Boston (Massachusetts) *Herald Traveler*. According to the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, there are four blind teachers now employed in the public schools of the commonwealth. The most recent addition to this slowly-opening field is Margaret Carey, reading instructor at the Abraham Lincoln School in Cambridge.]

School opened in Cambridge in 1968 on Wednesday, September 4. Miss Margaret Carey, teacher of a combined first and second grade at the Abraham Lincoln School, greeted her class on that first day and helped start them on their year's work on Thursday and Friday. That Friday night she went to sleep in her Arlington home and awakened on Saturday morning totally blind.

In September, 1969, just one year after she was struck by a handicap that had been unsuspected, Margaret Carey was back at the Abraham Lincoln School, the only blind certified teacher in Massachusetts.

Her return to teaching is not only a personal triumph, Margaret Carey wants her story told to prove that blind people can function in jobs that are barred to

them.

Sitting at a table, with her tape recorder, her Braille record book and primary readers, in the basement library of the Lincoln School, she talks very easily and without any self consciousness about her handicap and her adjustment to an experience that could only be shattering for an attractive young school teacher. Her soft green eyes turn toward her visitors, and her sightlessness is hard to accept.

Since 1958 the state has permitted certification of blind teachers, but, in fact according to Miss Carey not one has been hired because superintendents are reluctant to assume the responsibility for a teacher without sight.

But Cambridge school officials say that Miss Carey has taught them how wrong this attitude could be. Principal John G. O'Keefe, under whose supervision Miss Carey works, said last week that he had been more fearful than she about the obstacles of teaching when blind. "But I can say that I am delighted with her performance."

Margaret Carey was graduated from Simmons College in 1959, a psychology major. She taught the following year in Hartford, Connecticut, which counted as practice teaching toward her certification in Massachusetts. Then she worked in Danvers, teaching remedial reading and math.

For the next six years she taught at Lincoln School. Meanwhile, she also earned a master's degree in education from the State College at Boston.

What did she do last September? "I stayed home," she replies simply and with-

out bitterness.

In January, the Commission for the Blind supplied a teacher of Braille who tutored her at home. By springtime when she enrolled at St. Paul's Rehabilitation Center in Newton, Miss Carey was sufficiently competent in this new language to be able to teach Braille to her fellow students.

It was in that period that Miss Carey gave real thought to returning to teaching, hoping that she could become a home tutor for other blind adults. But her own tutor, Lawrence Duncan, who himself is blind, refused to let her settle for tutoring.

Inasmuch as she was a certified teacher, he said she should return to teaching in a regular school situation.

It was Duncan who pursued this line with Cambridge school officials until he won their consent.

There's no doubt now, O'Keefe acknowledges, that Duncan was right.

Miss Carey is now the remedial teacher at the Lincoln School working with children, either individually or in groups up to five. She follows their progress as they read from a text with a tape recorder, equipped with an ear plug.

Each day a volunteer comes to Lincoln School or to Miss Carey's home to transcribe the children's readings onto the tape. Now, according to O'Keefe, every book in the school is in her tape library or is in Braille.

The flash cards used to teach youngsters words have Braille so that the teacher

can check on the responses.

Miss Carey plays Scrabble, a word game, with some of her children to stimulate and expand their vocabulary. The wooden squares each are marked in Braille.

She writes on the blackboard with remarkable ease and skill. "When the children write on the board, they guide my hand so I can check on their accuracy as they move along with the chalk," she said.

She taught the children to read their own names in Braille.

She uses all the techniques she knew when she was able to see in working with remedial reading problems: phonics, context and structural analysis.

She shows off a kit which enables her to write on polyethylene film so that the letters are raised and she and the children can both read the writing simultaneously.

Another accomplishment of this extraordinary woman, who wears her skirts fashionably mini-length and her hair in a cluster of auburn curls, is her ability to knit. She scorns the Braille instruction book and just completed a sweater she designed herself.

She hopes she is making it easier for the other education students. She knows of one now with the same handicap. Miss Carey said that a girl at Emmanuel, partially sighted, but legally blind, is training to be a teacher.

"And that's the only reason I'll tell my story."

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## THE RETURN OF THE EXILE

by

Manuel Urena

"The Sixth Annual Banquet of the Alumni Association of the Iowa Commission for the Blind Orientation Center shall be held in Des Moines on November 6, 1965."

Have you wondered what kind of an impact such a newspaper announcement would have upon the casual observer—the innocent peruser idly glancing through innumerable pages with reams of information and countless notices? Some would pass such a notice quickly in the same way that most are affected by happenings in

foreign lands. One man might pause just long enough for his mental processes to commence conjuring up hosts of helpless figures being pushed, prodded, led or pulled toward laden tables filled with the bountiful offerings of some civic minded group or generous philanthropist. He would hurriedly move on to more entertaining reading feeling that the unfortunates of the community were in good hands and that in any case it was really none of his business. If he thought about it he would salve his conscience by

promising himself that next time he would give more when the collection came for the Christmas dinner for the "needy". At the very least he would donate more of his broken-down furniture to provide menial and repetitive jobs for the so-called broken-down members of the town.

Still another would see the words and in all likelihood his eyes would become clouded for he would think of a neighbor or a stranger or more poignantly of a loved one: father, mother, son or daughter, wife or husband, who through no fault of their own had been hurled into the world of "endless night" where none but the defective may enter. In the depths of his grief this individual would seek explanations and reasons, searching where he might have altered events. He would doubtlessly beseech the deity to rearrange circumstances in order to ameliorate the plight of those near and dear.

Finally, in our speculation of what the uninformed would envision, would be that person who has a slight acquaintance with a successful blind individual. This competent blind man would inconspicuously be performing as a lawyer, machinist, farmer, professor, businessman, engineer or any one of several callings. He would be at the workbench or at the desk, unobtrusive and unassuming in the performance of his daily tasks. Our reader, however, would refuse to accept this working man as normal or natural but would insist on clothing him in supernatural attire. Moreover, he would probably assume that many of those attending the festive occasion would be similarly endowed with miraculous powers.

Whatever the intent or motive for such conjectures the result inescapably

reaches an injurious consequence. In the fashion of another day, when it was said that all roads led to Rome, it is not difficult to surmise that although the approaches may vary, all paths wind toward the same dread locality--the country of the blind where shopworn notions of the dependent and emotionally unbalanced sightless eternally reign. For the ultimate effect of such characterizations is to sever the visually impaired from the body of society--declaring to one and all that this category of men is so different, so distinctive as to require total separation. It is readily apparent that the qualities ascribed are negative in content and resulted in harshness and malevolence.

This separation is a double-edged sword; first and foremost, by cutting off a member of society it ensures its starvation and death through lack of nourishment. Of equal import this parting denies to the body politic the gifts which that member would have contributed. The conclusion is obvious: all mankind is the worse for this loss. The poet Robert Frost succinctly put the case:

"Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
Something there is that does not love a  
wall."

We know positively that the purging of those who cannot see from society is not only irreconcilable with our historic traditions of freedom and democracy but that such conditions fail to recognize the dignity of the human spirit. Through observation or first hand experience all of us realize that loss of vision does not automatically deprive an individual of mentality, mobility or emotional equilibrium;

quite to the contrary, sight is a sense which is independent of other attributes--otherwise, how is it to be explained that incompetence, emotional instability, dependency and the like are qualities which plague sighted men and women? Surely not even the worst diehard of the era of custodialism would have us believe that such liabilities are monopolized by those who cannot see.

Dr. Jacobus tenBroek states the case accurately when he observes that the elements of blindness may be divided into two areas--the denotative and the connotative. The former relates to the physical loss; that is, lack of visual acuity--a disability. The latter is concerned with the social implications; that is, the beliefs, superstitions and misconceptions held by organized society about what the loss of sight entails. Lack of sight is properly the domain of medical men. The handicap (what blindness is thought to constitute) is the province for everybody. For a multiplicity of reasons too involved to fully discuss here, the heritage of the blind is heavily encrusted with the outmoded conceptions of bygone ages. Social changes do not immediately respond to scientific findings and consequently truths that can be demonstrably proved encounter resistance from many quarters before attaining popular acceptance--social scientists refer to this phenomenon as social lag. The significance of social lag is that while there is an abundance of evidence about the abilities of the blind the climate for acceptance remains hostile. In order to bring about a more tranquil and receptive atmosphere it is imperative that we understand the psychology that causes this inclemency. We must fully understand and be aware of the many guises and disguises it employs to banish the blind from the fraternity of

man.

It should be unmistakably clear that lack of employment opportunities is the curse of the blind. Without the means to acquire the necessities of life incentive is crippled in its embryonic stage. Development of initiative to a large degree hinges upon the hope of ever-rising expectations. Thus while I will be principally preoccupied with other focal points of the complexities of blindness, a proper perspective must be maintained. One must always keep foremost the notion that the indispensable prerequisite in a platform promulgated for equality is the plank stating the uncompromising objective of full and fair employment opportunity without irrelevant considerations and discriminatory practices.

The exile of the blind from the main thoroughfares of human endeavor has its roots in the connotative aspect, the handicap. As it is with many other groups the characteristics ascribed to the sightless have their origins in antiquity antedating biblical history. However, not until the modern epoch and the development of the discipline of sociology have we become concerned about the process by which stereotypes are crystallized.

In the process of rejecting selected people from the community it is essential that they be easily identified. The mark may be a religious trait or perhaps national or cultural customs--or as it is in the case of the Negro and the blind, it may be a clearly manifested physical quality. In any event the important factor is that they may be easily distinguished and therefore easily branded. Once this is accomplished the assault moves forward relentlessly and strips these victims of their individuality



insisting that all within the category act alike, work to the same degree of competency—usually lower—and think uniformly. The achievement of this objective is most crucial for it is at this point that unceasing injury is inflicted. Pause for a moment, reflect and consider what it means to be robbed of one's individuality. Aristotle proclaimed long ago that man is a rational animal; which is to say that the property responsible for elevating man above the rest of the species and granting to him the title, King of the Universe, is his mental supremacy. Possession of mental prowess unquestionably is the prime ingredient that makes human dignity possible, those quirks and idiosyncracies which stamp us with unique attributes insuring a singular entity. Denial of individuality necessarily culminates not only in extracting the blind from society but pushes them beneath the rest of humanity classifying them as less than men.

The most blatant demonstration of this brutal process occurred in Nazi Germany during World War II. There in the name of science the full machinery of government was let loose to vomit forth torrents of misinformation cruelly calculated to reduce the Jews to a subhuman position. Again and again it has been revealed that only by investing the Jewish people with unhuman properties was the government able to force the German people to perpetrate the atrocities which later came to light. Interestingly enough, a number of soldiers and government officials rather than execute the national policy discovered a way out through suicide. The relevance of this discussion is not to suggest that blind Americans are being subjected to similar treatment but it is to indicate that the failure to recognize

visually impaired men and women as equals is but a waystation on the same street. The blind are held up to society as a subordinate class of beings; they are pictured as totally incompetent, incapable of attaining maturity, unable and unwilling to speak or think for themselves.

If some would dispute these findings, judging them too harsh and exaggerated, I wish to set forth and examine eleven stereotyped characteristics that lend substance and validity to the foregoing testimony. These social chains tenaciously link the blind to the bondage of the past and add an oppressive burden upon their backs—resulting in impeding and frustrating their advance into the avenue of equality and activity.

To those familiar with the handicap of blindness this checklist will offer no surprises—no novelties whatsoever. Indeed, confrontations with one or another of these eleven assumptions are so frequent that perhaps we are to be pardoned if we are slow to react positively when meeting a person free from these prejudices.

Item one, The Goodly and the Godly. In this garb the blind man is pictured as an unearthly creature devoid of vice, suited only for deep meditation and reverence. Certainly it would be inconceivable for him to mix and deal with the hurly-burly of everyday life. This attitude is perfectly depicted by an episode which occurred when I was a student at the University of California. As part of a zoology course I was required to study the reproductive system. As our examination approached and the professor capsulized the material, I suddenly discovered that something was drastically wrong: questioning the reader revealed that

certain portions of the text had been deleted on the premise that blind people were not interested in such things. On a larger stage, these assumptions can be observed at work through the books that are selected to be transcribed into Braille. For many years the organized blind have pressed for the abolition of what amounts to censorship by those in charge of allocating the money appropriated by a generous Congress. Thus far our pleas have fallen to a large extent on deaf ears. No doubt the reading matter available to the blind has been partly responsible for creating this image of the blind.

I want to leave no misunderstanding about what I'm describing. Many who cannot see are deeply religious and hopefully many are endowed with numerous virtues; the important feature to note is that many arrive at such a point when they still have vision or because of earlier training. The truth of the matter is that blindness and what I have been describing have little if any interdependence.

Item two, The Wicked and Accursed. Fortunately this trait seems to be disappearing from daily contacts. However, signs that there is still life in the old horse are not impossible to uncover. In August of this year of grace, 1965, while operating a booth at a county fair, one of the students (incidentally, he is here with us tonight) was informed that his blindness was directly traceable to his previous mischievous and wicked conduct. Since I am rather well acquainted with this fellow I will vouch for the fact that his behavior could stand some improvement, but that is a far cry from declaring that punishment for his sinful past was meted out by destroying his eyes.

One is almost overwhelmed by the inconsistency and lack of any semblance of intelligence behind these assertions. Contrast items one and two and the results stagger the mind. On the one hand a blind man is thought to be otherworldly, enveloped in a mystic cloak of virtue; on the other he is accused of being a follower of Satan, if not his chosen representative. Whichever plank he chooses to walk clearly he walks it alone.

Item three, The Frail and Anemic. Dogging our every movement is the steadfast and immutable idea that our very next step will see us fall utterly exhausted. In a haunting refrain someone is always telling us that: he will carry it for us, or lift it for us, or rearrange it and do it for us. Some years ago a seventy-five year old father insisted that his six-foot-tall, two hundred pound blind son was fully capable of getting along independently in the world. When I escorted them into a room he exhibited considerable annoyance and anger when I prevented him from carrying his son's luggage. Not too long ago a man was advised by his neighbor to wait until his wife returned home so that she could carry a box of records upstairs for him. Many other examples are easily recalled but why go on endlessly. The truth of the matter is plain for anyone who cares to look: the blind are no less strong or no more weak than their sighted counterparts--blindness and strength are not mutually exclusive.

Item four, The Social Untouchables. This prejudice manifests itself in diverse ways. Paradoxically, Father Thomas Carroll's *Twenty Lacks and Losses* asserts that it is the blind that lose facility with spoken communication. Yet how many of us have entered a room, an office, a bus or



the like and listened to the total silence descend almost as if someone had waved a wand and sealed the lips of everyone simultaneously. Ordinarily I am not a gambling man but I would be willing to wager a few coins that the good Father has not experienced the reverse. This avoidance condition is present not because the blind wish or labor for it; quite the contrary, we desire full integration and complete liberation from that isolation which has impoverished our minds and bodies and which is chiefly responsible for fostering those characteristics that misguide the general public.

Item five, the Prey of Pryers. At the most inconvenient times, with disconcerting regularity, this problem crops up and usually taxes all the diplomacy and patience one can muster. The issue to which I refer presents itself either publicly or privately. To estimate the instances in which all of us have had to field embarrassing queries about how we handle our affairs, conduct our private lives, perform our intimate personal daily tasks and the whole gamut of similar details, would be beyond our capacity. By what right the sighted citizen of average or superior intellect believes he has the authority to pry into these areas is not clear, but we know that at the root of this issue is the absence of dignity. The average person would not countenance such probings into his personal business. He would regard such conduct as insulting since it is only proper to probe into the particular goings and comings of lesser entities. Dignity ensures respect; it is difficult if not totally impossible to have one and not the other.

Item six, Impurity. The following quotation is taken from *Hope Deferred*, a book known to all in this room:

*"A man was rejected as a donor by the blood bank in his city--not on the grounds that his blood was not red, that it was diseased or defective, or that he had too little of it--but on the grounds that he was blind."*

In case some may think that this alludes to an incident twenty or thirty years ago, you may be somewhat startled to discover that this refusal to permit a sightless person to give blood occurred less than ten years ago in this country. The characterization becomes more insidious and naked in its application when viewed from another direction. Usually when a son or daughter selects a mate it is an occasion for spontaneous celebration and exchanging of congratulations all around. But once it is revealed that the prospective bride or bridegroom is blind, the *cause celebre* becomes *casus belli* and finally results in family discontent and sometimes permanent rupture. Not until sight or the lack of it becomes an irrelevancy in such issues as giving blood and the desirability of a marriage partner, shall those of us with faulty eyes be assured of the genuineness of public regard and our total acceptance as first class citizens.

Item seven, Permanent Childhood. Most of the items that I have enumerated and those that are still to follow have an element of the present one--all imply to a greater or lesser extent that the blind are children. This permanent immaturity in which the blind are clad is part and parcel of the dilemma in which the sightless find themselves. Children in our culture are cherished, loved, sheltered and protected in a haven free from gales and holocausts. Popular beliefs and customs dictate that youth should only be exposed to the joyful and pleasurable--time enough in

maturity to experience the sordidness and hardships that are concomitants of human existence. The trouble lies in the fact that the blind are never allowed to attain maturity but cannot be fully shielded from the travails and vicissitudes of adulthood.

In its superficial manifestation this stigma is a nuisance and casual embarrassment, as when a waitress asks the sighted companion what the blind person will eat or whether he likes cheese with his apple pie. In its more profound form this "benevolent" stereotype works irreparable injury and is the greatest barrier of all the stumbling blocks over and around which the blind must travel in order to obtain the good life. When traced to its full implications this posture declares to all that those without sight are wanting in mature judgment, that they are incapable of expressing themselves in a cogent, logical form, and that they lack the capacity and/or the inclination to speak for themselves. The syllogism might read: All children are dependent, The blind are forever children, Therefore the blind now and always shall be dependent.

The fact that the Kennedy-Baring Right to Organize legislation is not now a statute is an indication of how deeply entrenched this conception of immaturity is imbedded in the fabric of our society. Even though the battle was lost, the campaign rages and we must remain constantly alert for otherwise we shall lose the fruits which we so laboriously cultivated in the congressional hearings. Much that we would have secured with the passage of the Right to Organize Bill is ours today; the task ahead is to build upon and expand the dimensions of organization and consultation. Only by sustaining the

impetus shall we fulfill the goal we set for ourselves at midcentury.

Item eight, Protective Exclusion. Of all the prejudices and discriminatory practices that bedevil the way of the blind none is more galling and alien to the human spirit than those that derive their source from such foolish logic and chuckleheaded nonsense as to be laughable, were they not so conspicuously prevalent. Within the last two years the student body of the Center was denied a tour through a place of business advertised as open for public visitation. The argument was inevitably anchored on the meritorious principle that the refusal was made in order to preserve "our" safety. Communicating to those in charge the fact that the Center student body had previously visited the plant without incident--catastrophic or otherwise--had absolutely no influence whatsoever. Last summer a university student and graduate of this Center was not permitted to take the full tour of Rockefeller Center in New York because of the lurking dangers to be found there--again on the theory of her safety. Repeatedly, in state after state, examples similar to those mentioned could be multiplied. The rejection, the embarrassment, the evasive responses, all might be patiently endured; but what is particularly offensive and bitterly distasteful is the accompanying sugar coating--suggesting that such exclusion is not prejudice at all, but simply concern for our welfare.

It is by exposing ourselves to the dangers and realities of life that we gain self-confidence. John Milton correctly observed,

*"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered*

*virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. . . that which purifies us is trial . . . ”*

Item nine, The Impoverished. The Good Book admonishes one and all that it is better to give than to receive. Apparently this dictum applies to everyone (incidentally, including children) except the blind. For inexplicable reasons it is literally impossible for a blind man to purchase a neighbor's or companion's lunch, a cup of coffee, or the like—unless, indeed, that friend is also without sight. Belief in his own superiority prevents the sighted man from accepting favors from somebody innately inferior and of course poorer—thus we must conclude.

Unfortunately, altogether too often the blind are found wanting in financial resources. However, to deduce from that fact the notion that the blind are somehow selected by providence to always bear the cross of poverty is to presuppose first-hand knowledge of providential affairs—to my knowledge the deity has still to appoint to his cabinet a secretary for foreign and domestic affairs. Closer to the mark is the earlier reason: denied equality of opportunity, frustrated in education, forbidden employment, and similar rejections—is it any wonder that few blind have escaped the bleak house that is the dwelling place of poverty? We will have to wait a little longer until condescension toward the blind ceases to be automatic and there is substituted in its place a friendly understanding and free exchange of ideas and favors in genuine brotherly generosity.

Item ten, The Witless and Unwary.

Down through the ages there has floated the tale about a certain individual who gave a sum of money to a group of blind men. As the story has been retold for generations, this would-be philanthropist gave the entire amount to one of the blind, instructing him to share it with the rest of his unfortunate brothers. In actuality he had given nothing. The story would have us all believe that the members of the group were unable to detect the fraud. Receiving nothing, they immediately fell upon one another, delivering sharp blows, endeavoring to secure their riches. Today this tale takes a different dress but the style is dreadfully familiar. In modern attire we recognize it in the fact that in some states blind vending stand operators are prohibited from accepting paper currency exceeding in value the one dollar bill. We see it in denying to the blind jury duty on the assumption that lacking sight blind men and women might be deceived into making foolish decisions—and the list could go on interminably. One is prompted to recall that famous keynote speech of Governor Frank Clements: “How long, O Lord?” The tides of prejudice and ignorance are slow to recede and in their ebbing they leave untold devastation and destruction.

Item eleven, Professional Objectivity. We now come to the end of our catalog, but before closing the book one more immense hurdle remains to be identified. Ominous, hidden and disguised as it may be with fancy terminology, circuitous logic and interminable verbiage, and thickly coated with highflown credentials, still we must face the issue squarely and refuse to retire from the lists until the light of day determines its worthiness. I refer to the modern day cult of scientific evaluation.

To pretend to ignore the merit of modern science would be utter folly. The miracles of modern psychology, psychiatry and general medicine abound everywhere. Nevertheless, in the field of work for the blind these disciplines have been diverted from their useful purposes and have become the chief instrumentalities for reinvigorating and revitalizing outmoded concepts. In the new elaborate edifices springing up throughout the country destined to house rehabilitation centers for the blind, part of the paraphernalia is a battery of scientific equipment calculated to probe and resolve the mystery of blindness. The centers proudly display their antiseptic laboratory facilities and insist that by employment of these tools, together with a multiplicity of tests, they can determine what is best for the blind trainee, or client, and in some cases, patient. Let the record be without equivocation; whether it be in the name of ignorance or superstition as it was in prehistoric, classical and medieval days, or whether it be in the name of paternalism and patronage as it emerged in the last four or five centuries, or whether it be in the name of scientific investigations and evaluations as it is today: it is wrong to deny the blind the right to self-determination. To be sure, where the advances of science properly utilized show the way out of the imprisonment in which the blind have been confined for so long, then by all means incorporate these discoveries into the body of knowledge for the betterment of all. But where scientific truths are misused or are unwholesomely applied to mislead or reinforce prejudices then they are to be aggressively resisted.

Probably no other group in society is presupposed *ipso facto* to be maladjusted. The practice is developing that the con-

genitally blind are to be "habilitated" and the adventitiously blind "rehabilitated." We know full well that the difference between the two are grossly exaggerated and that the problems of blindness are common to all. Current prevailing practices insist that every blind man needs the ministrations of a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and, indeed, a score of professionals to give him contact with reality—labeled the multi-discipline approach. What the blind man needs most is the chance to earn his livelihood. Once this is secured he is entirely capable of making his way through life. Let us once and for all turn away from the dismal past and set our feet firmly toward the ever ascending road of the future—a road that is unobstructed by the pitfalls of ignorance and prejudice and the waystations of discrimination, second class citizenship and presumed personality disorder. In declaring the normality of the blind one cannot help but recall the memorable words in the *Merchant of Venice* spoken in another day and setting but having particularly profound significance to the 20th century blind:

*Have we not . . . "hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer . . . ? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?"*

Let those who would deny our normality heed the warning of that eloquent proclamation.

From all that has been said five propositions evolve:

1) To be robbed of individuality immediately detracts from the worth of a person, causing annoyance and embarrassment. In its underlying effects it obliterates dignity altogether and dehumanizes, categorizing the afflicted as subhuman. Therefore, first and foremost the blind must be recognized as individuals possessing all the weaknesses and strengths which that implies. Among the inescapable postulates which flow from this first proposition is that the blind are indeed a cross section of mankind mirroring their society in every aspect but sight.

2) Blindness is at once a disability and a handicap. The first pertains to the physical loss of visual acuity and is the sphere for medicine; the latter is more subtle and harder to ferret out and identify. The handicap is the connotative aspect of blindness representing the prevailing social attitudes and predilections. In order for full emancipation to come to us public preconceptions about the blind must be sharply altered. It becomes imperative for all of us to be active in the dynamics of this change. The task immediately ahead is to substitute a new, vigorous image of the blind for the old weary notions.

3) Equality with its privileges and immunities and obligations still is in the offing for the blind. Only the promise is visible; the reality has thus far escaped our reach. Principally it is to be gained by opening the channels to full-fledged employment potentialities. Nonetheless, important as job prospects are, public hostility, ignorance and avoidance must give way to a truly benevolent spirit of brotherhood. All protestations about compensatory supernatural or inordinate powers tend to sever the blind from the body of society and therefore are rejected *in toto*.

Those attributes which seek to bring about fair employment, social adaptation and integration are welcome and enthusiastically endorsed.

Many a pioneer in his trek to the West experienced a spiritual uplift as he spied the red schoolhouses and the white churches that dotted the landscape as settlements grew and prospered. To the tired sojourner these signposts symbolized freedom of worship and opportunity for self-advancement through publicly supported education. Freedom meant a freehold, a piece of land free from government interference or outside authority. Freedom meant mobility, geographically to be sure, but of even greater import for the future, socially—a chance to bid farewell to the rigid medieval caste system of Europe. In the New World contrary to the Old men could rise because work was noble and wholesome, not demeaning. That truly is the heart of the precept of equality of opportunity.

Now and in generations to come the blind, too, will be refreshed by the achievements of our toil. Instead of the schools and churches they will find traditions such as the one in which we are engaged here tonight. They will discover centers seeking to inculcate an affirmative philosophy, forging the sinews necessary to succeed. They will have a network of state and national organizations devoted to the task of promoting enlightened legislation and providing a public forum where the blind may be both seen and heard. Jobs, orientation centers, traditions and organizations, all signposts calculated to erode the present image of the blind and to substitute for it the idea of the blind as normal productive citizens.



4) Society, too, has suffered long enough; it demands that a permanent moratorium be established against all prejudices and discriminations that lay waste to its resources. The enrichment possible through integration of the blind is not only desired but necessary. No longer can society afford the luxury of not utilizing every member fully to resolve its business, for truly, "Something there is that does not love a wall."

5) The blind shall be exiled from the brotherhood of man no more. Let the word go forth that this generation of blind men and women repudiates the banish-

ment that has for so long prevailed. This generation will no longer tolerate the sub-human state to which the blind have been relegated. We refuse for a moment longer to be known as the men without a country. From this day forward we shall occupy a permanent stronghold among the dwelling places of men, a position that rightfully is ours both because we have worked diligently and because of our rights as human beings with dignity and responsibility. The estranged shall be a part of the community, not apart from it—the exile has at long last returned to find his honorable home.

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## LEGISLATIVE GAINS IN VIRGINIA

by

Jimmy Nelson

Much agitation was aroused among the blind of this State last year, when going to vote they realized for the first time the special session of the General Assembly earlier that year had eliminated their long-standing right of having a person chosen by them to assist in voting. Happily, this privilege has now been restored to law.

The Federation gave active support, by personal testimony and letter, to the request of the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped for funds to make possible the construction of the Rehabilitation Adjustment Center for the Blind in Richmond, which had been under consideration for some four years and in which the VFB has had great interest. Much to

the surprise of the Commission and the Federation, in this year of tight finances in the Commonwealth, virtually the entire budget request of some \$700,000 was granted, and this amount, coupled with an almost identical sum expected from sale of property near Charlottesville, will allow for construction of the Center and staffing for the first year. The Federation also supported a Commission bill, which would place responsibility for education of visually impaired persons under the Commission. This was passed and signed into law.

Unfortunately, there were certain unavoidable delays in the introduction of the Model White Cane Law, so that insufficient time was left to iron out certain

differences with existing law. We were however informed by the patron of the bill that it received much sympathetic consideration.

Virginia's Lien Law, long a target of the VFB, has for all practical purposes been abolished in this State. Initially, in this session of the Legislature, when the bill to abolish the Lien Law was voted down in the House, the situation looked dark indeed; but swift VFB action succeeded in gaining reconsideration and ultimate victory. There is a minor provision

allowing for some possible collection by the State if it can be determined within one year after the recipient's death that actually resources for his assistance were indeed available during the time he was receiving Aid to the Blind or Old-Age Assistance. However, we have been told by the Welfare Department that this provision will rarely, if ever, be used. Abolition of liens took effect as of the time of the Governor's signature, which was April 6, 1970. We entertain the hope that before long Relatives' Responsibility may go the way of the Lien Law.

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## THE MISSOURI CONVENTION by Hazel Hill

The eighth annual convention of the Progressive Blind of Missouri was held at the Aladdin Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri on April 3, 4 and 5. Our hospitality room was enjoyed by all on Friday evening. The business session began on Saturday morning. A highlight of our morning session was a speech by our International Federation of the Blind President, Rienzi Alagiyawanna, on the progress of his work with the blind in Ceylon and Germany. He told of the great lack of knowledge among the blind in these countries concerning the actions of organized blind throughout the world. Also emphasized by Rienzi was the urgent need of these people for reading material and financial aid. Another feature of the morning was a description of the services offered by the Wolfner Library at St. Louis, Missouri by the assistant librarian, Mr. Walter Smith (he is the first

totally blind person to receive a Bachelor of Science degree as a librarian). Still I would have to say, in all fairness, that the innovation of the day was a panel discussion organized and led by our youth group. The theme of the discussion was "The Eyes of Missouri Look at the Educational and Employment Opportunities." When you see the determination and enthusiasm displayed by these young adults, you get the feeling that the work for the blind is going to be in good hands in the up-coming generation.

Our banquet on Saturday evening was the largest we have ever enjoyed. It was attended by some 200 people. The high point of the banquet and convention came as our National President Kenneth Jernigan delivered his speech, which was not only well received by the audience but



also well covered by the press.

On Sunday morning we got down to the real nuts and bolts of the convention. Voting on resolutions, election of officers and all other unfinished business. The following officers were elected: E. E. Busby, President; Mrs. W. W. Beedle, Vice President; Mrs. Pauline Salter, Recording Sec-

retary; Mrs. Helen Mohler, Treasurer; Mrs. Hazel Hill, Corresponding Secretary; Gayford Allen, Education and Welfare Chairman; Dr. Gerald Salter, Finance Chairman; Harry Clark, Member at Large; Roland Sykes, Chairman—Walter Smith, Co-Chairman, Public Relations; Michael Briggs, Representative "Eyes of Missouri."

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## WE CAN DO MORE

by

Robert E. Hampton

[Editor's Note: The following is reprinted from *Performance*, the publication of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. Mr. Hampton is the Chairman of the U. S. Civil Service Commission.]

The Civil Service Commission's program for employing the handicapped in the Federal service has recently entered a new phase. This represents the latest in a series of significant changes in attitude regarding employment of the handicapped, one of the earliest of which was the breakaway from the high physical standards for civil service employment that prevailed prior to World War II.

The determination to provide employment for disabled veterans was the principal force behind the change and is today a high priority of the Civil Service Commission. Since that time, the thinking in the Federal service has progressed to the point where employment of the handicapped is not only accepted but positively promoted. The most recent phase takes us one step further ahead in our thinking—a very important and meaningful step.

The old fears that once stood in the way of hiring the physically handicapped—low productivity, high accident risk, excessive absenteeism—were laid to rest many years ago by the performance record of handicapped men and women on the job.

But until about 5 years ago, the definition of "handicapped" in relation to employability was fairly narrow. Many government employers still had doubts as to whether or not the deaf, the blind, the epileptic, the quadriplegic, the emotionally restored, and the mentally retarded could really measure up in competitive employment.

The only way to resolve such questions is by experience. To gain that experience, we undertook a limited program to employ mentally retarded persons in jobs for which they were specially train-

ed and certified by vocational rehabilitation agencies. The success of that venture, which now is well known, surpassed our highest hopes for it. Federal agencies are now hiring the mentally retarded at a rate of over a thousand a year, and the employees are proving themselves in more than a hundred different occupations.

But the successful employment of the mentally retarded is only half of the total success of this forward step. The other half is the change in thinking that it has brought about with respect to the severely handicapped and persons with multiple handicaps.

The process of selective placement of the mentally retarded requires close working relationships between the vocational rehabilitation counselor and the agency personnel officer, manager, and Coordinator for Placement of the Handicapped, as well as the Civil Service Commission. In the course of this process, jobs suitable for other kinds of limited capabilities have been observed. This, combined with the outstanding success of the retardates as employees, has led to much broader con-

sideration of the very severely handicapped.

In the year 1968 there were 160 appointments made under the special authority provided for employing the handicapped, whereas there had been only 60 the previous year. The total has now reached over 370. Considerable ingenuity and flexibility have been used by employing agencies—one of them, for instance, permitting a highly qualified quadriplegic to do much of his work at home.

While we are enlarging our thinking regarding employability of the severely handicapped, and devising arrangements to adapt more kinds of jobs to their capabilities, those very capabilities are being increased by new developments in many kinds of prostheses. These developments should spur us on to consideration of still more of the severe handicaps that have previously been thought unemployable.

The thought we keep always before us in this work is that, however much we have done, we can do more.

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## EULASEE HARDENBERGH

The strength of the National Federation is its organization—that one blind man may speak for 40,000. But the success of the organization depends on that one—whether he speaks well or ill. The Federation has a history of leaders of immense strength; it has lost one of these leaders in the death of Eulasee Hardenbergh.

Blinded while attending high school in Birmingham, Alabama (her home from 1917 until her death), Eulasee was transferred to the Alabama school for the blind at Talladega where she encountered at once the position granted her handicap by society.

"Forty-four of us girls slept in the third floor of a building which was, to say the least, a fire hazard. Seven of us slept in one room and 37 of us slept in another. There was one small bathroom for the entire 44 girls. We had no closets, no dressers, no privacy. These same facilities and conditions still exist. I am glad to say they are changing." (They changed in 1957 with the building of a new school after an intensive campaign by the school and the Alabama Federation of the Blind, of which Eulasee was president.)

Eulasee began her career in the organized blind with her election, in 1953, to the office of executive secretary of the Alabama Federation of the Blind. She was elected treasurer in 1955 and president of the AFB the next year. One of her first acts as executive secretary had been to write to the NFB President asking his advice in constructing a legislative program for Alabama, and it was in this area that Eulasee was first to demonstrate the effects of her energy and persistence.

The Kennedy-Baring bill, legislating the right of the blind to organize and requiring state agencies to consult the organized blind in developing programs for them, was introduced in 1957. Alabama was to play a crucial part in the effort to pass this bill since two of the legislators most important to its success (Senator Lister Hill, chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare--the committee to pass on the bill in the Senate--and Representative Carl Elliott of the House Committee on Education and Labor, who chaired the subcommittee which held hearings on the bill) were Alabamans. President tenBroek urged Eulasee to work for the bill and she did so with great vigor. She wrote to Dr. tenBroek in

November, 1957:

"Please forgive me for having waited such a long time before writing you, but as you probably already know I have been quite busy trying to keep in behind 'our boys' and that includes Congressman Elliott. Since John Taylor has given you an account of our interview with Senator Hill, I shall not go into that. However, I will say that I returned to Birmingham with confidence that we have his support. I have written him since returning, and that isn't all. I plan to write him about every ten days. Believe me my Alabama Senators and Congressmen, or most of them at least, will certainly know who I am by January."

They not only learned who Eulasee was; both Senators and eight of the nine Alabama Congressmen introduced bills supporting the Kennedy-Baring measure. When the House held hearings on the bill in March, 1959, Eulasee testified for the AFB

"We are trying to educate the public to the fact that blindness is not the terrible and limiting factor that most people think it to be. We are trying to help our own blind people to come to a new realization of what they can accomplish with proper opportunity and training. We are trying to bring about improvements in our State programs for the blind. The lives of the blind people in Alabama are being made better by the fact that we have an Alabama Federation of the Blind. If our State agencies were afraid to see us organize independently or even at times criticize their actions, all programs for the blind would be greatly retarded. . . . When the agencies for the blind are willing to recognize the right of the blind to orga-

nize, and when the blind and agencies work cooperatively together and consult about common problems, the results are beneficial to all concerned, and it can be done. We have done it in Alabama.”

Ten years later, reporting to President tenBroek on her efforts for disability insurance legislation, Eulasee referred to the earlier campaign. “I want to keep you up with what I am doing in Alabama. I am writing again this week to the eight Alabama Congressmen. I guess I am still somewhat like I was when I worked on the Right to Organize bill, worry our Congressmen until they do something in order to get rid of me. I do not like to be out-done.”

After the hearings Eulasee continued her legislative campaign in the state, working for a reform of Alabama voting laws for the blind and to restore a sales tax exemption for blind businessmen. In December of that year (1959) she was elected president of the Birmingham Chapter, AFB. In July, 1960 Eulasee Hardenbergh became the first Alabamian to sit on the Executive Committee of the NFB, and in October she was re-elected president of the AFB.

During the period of Eulasee's association with the AFB in the 1950's, it grew in numbers and influence, beginning with a single chapter in Birmingham and forming chapters in Montgomery, Mobile and Anniston. But, as in the NFB, if a strong leader spurred the organization to expansion and a new ambition, that leadership awakened personal ambitions which were first foiled by and then united against the strength of personality of the leader. The dissension in the AFB, which grew during the 1960's until it climaxed in

a civil war in 1966, was parallel to the NFB civil war in that the dissenters found their only base of support in agencies hostile to the work of the Federation. Thus opposition to a person became inevitably an attack on federationism itself

As early as 1957 there were indications that agencies had gained influence with one of the affiliate chapters. The unauthorized opposition by this chapter to the Kennedy-Baring bill had led finally to its suspension from the AFB. Eulasee had dealt with this earlier trouble, but not without gaining enemies. In 1962, confidence in her was great enough to elect her to the office of Secretary of the NFB.

But in 1966, the certainty that Eulasee would again be elected president of the AFB drove her opponents to desperate measures. In the month before the convention, one of the chapters increased its membership five times (enlisting shopworkers from a town thirty miles away and members of the affiliate suspended in 1960, as well as paper members) in order to create delegate votes for the election. When this stuffed delegation was seated at the convention, Eulasee and her supporters walked out.

The next years were bleak as the dispute splintered the state organization and made enemies of long-time friends and colleagues. The loss of a united state organization removed Eulasee's base for national office and she was not re-elected Secretary of the NFB. In the fall of 1966 she wrote to Dr. tenBroek:

“I am so tired of fighting and being criticized. . . . Do you think it is really worth while going through so much? [One of the opposition] made this remark,

'Eulasee is down now and we are going to keep her down.' They really felt quite victorious after I was dropped as a national officer." And yet this was just the beginning of her fight. As a result of the actions at the 1966 convention, the Alabama Federation of the Blind was suspended by the NFB in 1967. Eulasee resigned from the Birmingham Chapter and began a new state affiliate--the Alabama Association of the Blind (AAB). A string of court suits followed, on both sides. About these Eulasee wrote, "Some who are really with our group are so afraid of court again, so for that reason they are just standing by letting things develop. I do not want any more court, but I am certainly not afraid and going to court did not embarrass me for I was standing up for my convictions."

The court's delays hardly deterred Eulasee. In 1967, when she had no national office and only a shaky state base, she turned away from organizational politics to concentrate on the programs of the NFB. She plunged into the fight for disability insurance legislation:

"When I wrote and when I continue writing to them, I write as an individual, not in the name of any organization and certainly not as an officer for I am none. I do mention the National Federation of the Blind. I am going to do my best and I am certainly going to work with you [Dr. tenBroek] and the NFB in every way I possibly can, just let me know what you want me to do."

Even, when, in September, 1967, the ousted AFB instituted suit against the officers of the NFB for "interference" in Alabama affairs, Eulasee remained largely outside. Her own affiliate, the AAB, had

been recognized by the NFB Convention in Los Angeles (1967) and her role now lay in reuniting the blind of the state into a force for furthering Federation programs. The recent years have seen just this.

In 1968 Eulasee Hardenbergh was appointed by Alabama Governor Albert Brewer to the Governor's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped.

In March of this year Eulasee was told she had extensive internal cancer; two months later she was dead.

Eulasee Hardenbergh was associated with the Federation for seventeen years. During more than half of those years she was put in the position of actively battling for it. This common battle brought her into close contact and friendship with the officers of the NFB: particularly two Southerners, John Taylor and Kenneth Jernigan, and her faithful correspondent, Jacobus tenBroek. She had in common with these men a fighting spirit which was second only to her distaste for battle. She had a penchant for managing which badgered legislators to her side and infuriated her opponents as it delighted her colleagues. Immediately after his resignation from the NFB Presidency in 1961, Jacobus tenBroek received a letter inviting him to speak at the AFB convention:

"... I will not be satisfied with anyone except you.... I already have reserved a suite for you. I would really hate to transfer this to someone else, in fact I don't know that I would, so you just better be here...."

I am like Burlie\* now, I am sick and tired of all this foolishness. Montgomery is back

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\*Burlie Dutton, Mrs. Hardenbergh's close friend and colleague.



of me in every way. I could keep on and on, but it will end with the same old story. Just let me hear from you as soon as possible and write that you will be with us. Honestly, Dr. tenBroek, when you resigned, it was such a shock to me, I was just sick and felt as though the NFB had fallen completely apart. I was ready to quit and never turn my hands or thoughts again toward the Federation or any organization of the Blind, but after pulling myself together I realized if the NFB needed support ever, now is the time."

To which Dr. tenBroek replied:

"May I also say to you that your stalwart support over the years always gave me a great deal of strength. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of wonderful people in the Federation with the types of minds and personalities which make it possible for them to unite firmly together and to advance the cause. I shall always think of you as one of this select group."

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## TENNESSEE CONVENTION

by

Nellie Hargrove

The first annual convention of The National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee was held May 1-3, at the Andrew Jackson Hotel in Nashville. Friday afternoon and evening, conventioners spent their time in committee meetings, social gatherings, and other significant functions. The Board of Directors met at 9 o'clock on Friday evening. Along with other important business, the board adopted two resolutions; one establishing a scholarship award for NFBT, and another establishing a "Federationist of the Year" award.

The Saturday morning business session was called to order at 9:30 by State President, Nellie Hargrove. After an invocation by the Reverend A. W. Dowell, who is also chaplain for the Middle Tennessee Chapter of NFBT, conventioners were welcomed to the city by a repre-

sentative of the Mayor's office and by hosting chapter president, J. Marshall Warren. Since Nashville is known as "Music City U.S.A.", Tex Ritter, well known country and western music star, gave a rousing welcome from the music industry.

A beautiful mahogany gavel, engraved in gold lettering *NFB of TENNESSEE, May 2, 1970*, was presented to the State President by C. Gordon Stephens, President of The Memphis Federation of the Blind. The President made good use of the gavel throughout the convention. Nobody napped and very few talked without recognition from the chair.

At noon, a luncheon featuring Clay Coble, superintendent of the Tennessee School for the Blind, as guest speaker was attended by one hundred and one persons.

Mr. Coble gave an informative address about the School for the Blind and about his general views of blindness..

In the afternoon session, John Taylor aroused new interest in the national organization by giving a lengthy and most interesting talk about what the NFB was doing nation-wide.

Election was next on the agenda, and it should be noted here that this one was probably among the shortest ever held in any state or chapter affiliate. Every name submitted as a nominee by the chairman of the nominating committee was elected by acclamation. The entire election was over in ten minutes. New officers are: Nellie Hargrove, President; Lev Williams, 1st Vice-president; J. Marshall Warren, 2nd Vice-president; Mrs. Lillie Christmas, Secretary; Miss Willette Marshall, Treasurer; Miss Gertie Wisdom, Theodore Walker and Elbert Haynes, Board Members. Mrs. Hargrove will be the delegate to the NFB convention and Mr. Williams will be the alternate delegate. Delegate to the NFB Student Division will be Sammy Stevens.

After the election, fundraising was discussed, and an informative talk was made by representatives from the company which handles the state's fundraising drive. This was followed by a panel from the A. P. Mills Workshop for the Blind in Memphis. Lev Williams and Henderson Dennis participated.

Highlight of the convention was the banquet, held Saturday evening in the Commodore Room of the hotel. John Taylor, featured speaker, gave an outstanding presentation. Mrs. Ethel Luten, assistant director of Tennessee's Library

for the Blind, was also a speaker at the banquet. The "Federationist of the Year" award was presented to Nellie Hargrove by Lev Williams. In his presentation, Mr. Williams stated that if Mrs. Hargrove ever joined the new "Feminist Movement" all the men would surely leave the state. Nellie was happy to inform him that if that were the case she certainly had no intentions of joining the movement. After the banquet, there was dancing in the Andrew Jackson Room, featuring music by Ted Walker and his band.

The Sunday session was devoted to legislation, with Mr. Taylor participating fully in the discussions. The body unanimously adopted motions to take the Model White Cane Law to the 1971 General Assembly and to present the Tennessee Commission for the Blind legislation to the 1971 Assembly also. Resolutions were adopted supporting the Disability Insurance Act and the NFB resolution on the "Blue Card legislation."

Door prizes were drawn throughout the convention. The grand prize, a radio--featuring AM-FM and operating by battery or electricity--was won by Lillie Christmas, who immediately donated it to the state organization as a prize to be sent to the NFB convention. The last prize drawn was a large coffee-maker and was won by Nellie Hargrove. She followed Lillie's good example and donated the coffee-maker to NFBT to be sent as a door prize to the NFB convention.

Tennessee's first convention was a smashing success! One hundred and forty persons attended the banquet and there was great interest and enthusiasm throughout the convention.

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## SHE DOES EVERYTHING BUT BROOD ABOUT HER BLINDNESS

by  
Carolyn Connors

[Reprinted from the *Riverside Press* (California).]

The final bell has signaled the end of classes for the day, but a group of seventh graders have gathered in Miss Esther Salata's room at La Sierra High School. Some have come to take a makeup history test. Some are busy changing displays on the bulletin board. Others are waiting to walk the teacher home. It's a typical classroom full of vibrant youngsters and an energetic 24-year-old teacher. There are the usual problems. Someone doesn't have a pencil, a boy is flying paper airplanes in the back of the room, a girl asks for construction paper for the bulletin board display. In just a few minutes Miss Salata has managed to calm the chaos, answer all the questions, and make sure the students have everything they need.

Only when the room has quieted down does one notice Scotty--the brown German shepherd sitting quietly at the teacher's side. Scotty is a seeing-eye dog, a constant companion to the teacher who has been blind since birth. He's the only indication that this classroom and this teacher are unique.

The students don't consider their teacher to be handicapped, and Miss Salata gives little attention to the subject. "Sure, they tried to get away with all kinds of stunts at first. But then they begin to

realize that what I can't see I can hear or sense in other ways, and they start shaping up in a hurry."

She doesn't ask for or receive special consideration in most areas. In addition to teaching six English-history courses a day to a total of 75 seventh-graders, she also is founder and adviser of the school's Space Club. The Space Club holds a special place in her heart because she dreams of "someday getting a master's degree in aerospace and helping to develop life support systems for the astronauts." She is working towards a master of science in history during summer vacations.

She graduated from Chico State College in June and came to Riverside this summer from her native Chico because "there was an opening for a blind teacher in this city."

When her busy class day is finished, she walks to her comfortable two-bedroom apartment which "is like any other bachelor girl apartment except that one bedroom is full of Braille books." When she's not correcting papers, planning lessons or making up tests, she'll put some Glen Campbell records on the stereo, work on her knitting or listen to her favorite radio program--a football or baseball game.

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## DO YOU WANT TO FORM A CREDIT UNION?

by  
Jim Omvig

In the past several months President Jernigan has had numerous inquiries by blind persons around the country regarding credit unions. Do some Federation affiliates have credit unions? Are they successful? How many are there? Do you have to be experts in order to run them successfully? How can a state affiliate form a credit union?

Since I am an attorney and have had some experience with credit unions, President Jernigan asked me to compile such information as is available and to furnish this information to anyone who requests it.

Following is the pertinent portion of a letter which I wrote to one of our chapter presidents who requested information as to how her chapter would go about forming a credit union.

Let me begin by commenting briefly upon the basic nature of a credit union. Stated very simply: it is a cooperative bank. Members of your Federation who have money to invest can do so with a fair return on their investments, and this money is then available to members who wish to borrow at reasonable rates. The advantage to both parties is that there is no commercial establishment involved to claim its share of the profits.

Perhaps the most basic requirement of all in the formation of a credit union is that the organization which contemplates establishing one must exist for some purpose other than the establishment of a

credit union. You certainly meet this requirement.

If you wish to seriously consider the formation of a credit union I would suggest that your first step should be to contact your state Credit Union League. Someone from this League would be willing to speak free of charge at one of your meetings. He could explain the complete operation of a credit union, how to establish one under the laws of your state, and he would also be in a position to pursue with you the feasibility of establishing a credit union in a group of your particular size. In addition, if, after an examination of all the facts and circumstances, you were to decide to establish a credit union, your state Credit Union League would assist you in setting up all of your books and records and would have all the books, forms, and other materials available for your purchase.

Your letter did not indicate the size of your particular group but a word might be said on this subject, generally. Although there is no minimum number required by law for the formation of a credit union, I suspect (and I think the League's representative would support me on this point) that it would not be practical for a really small group to organize a credit union. I believe that there would have to be a potential of 100 to 150 members before it could be really effective and profitable for all concerned. The reason for this is that there simply must be enough members depositing substantial amounts of money so that meaningful

(substantial) loans could be made to those who wish to borrow. The credit union laws state that a loan may be made up to \$100 or 10% of the assets of the credit union, whichever is greater. In other words, if you sold \$5 shares in a total amount of less than \$1,000 the most you could loan to any one person would be \$100. I think you would agree with me that most persons who wish to borrow money intend to borrow more than that amount. On the other hand, as deposits grow the amount which may be loaned out to any one individual also grows. For example, if you have deposits of \$10,000 you can loan an individual as much as \$1,000. Or, if your deposits amount to \$30,000, you could lend an individual up to \$3,000. Then you would be in a position to make meaningful loans for furniture, appliances, and cars, etc. In our Iowa credit union we now have deposits of around \$60,000.

At the present time (so far as I know) there would appear to be three successful credit unions run by affiliates of the NFB around the country. These are organized on a statewide basis, rather than at the local chapter level, and are found in California, Minnesota, and Iowa.

In the event you should decide to form a credit union, the first thing you need to do is to get signatures from several of your Federation members (ten under Iowa law) and apply to your state licensing agency in charge of credit unions for a charter. Our licensing agency in Iowa is the State Banking Commission. Your Credit Union League will give you information as to whom to apply in your state.

After you have secured your charter, an organizational meeting must be held.

Any member of your Federation will be eligible to vote. At this meeting you must adopt by-laws and elect the agreed upon number of members for your Board of Directors. We have nine in Iowa. Then the members of the Board themselves elect, from their own membership, a President, a Vice-President, a Treasurer—he is in charge of the books, records and finances—a Secretary, a Credit Committee, and an Auditing Committee. Such other committees as Membership and Publicity might also be elected.

As soon as your charter has been obtained and you have elected a Board, you are ready to begin selling shares. Beginning with the first dollar you take in, the Treasurer must keep accurate books and records. Your State Credit Union League will assist him in setting up the books. In Iowa we began with no paid staff but as the operation has become large and successful, we found it desirable to hire a bookkeeper.

So far as membership in the credit union is concerned, a member of your association does not automatically become a member of the credit union when one is formed. Individuals must apply for membership and receive approval by the membership committee or officer. In order to join the credit union, a person must purchase at least one \$5 share and pay a 25-cent service fee. This service fee is paid upon joining the credit union. There is no fee as additional shares are purchased.

Who is eligible for membership? There is some flexibility here. In Iowa, for instance, those who are eligible are: members in good standing of the Iowa Association of the Blind; their spouses; their dependent children; parents of members



who live in the same household with the member; and the IAB itself, or its organizational affiliates. This latter category has been of substantial benefit to us since our state organization and some of our local chapters had a good deal of money to invest—money which was then available for loan to other members.

As soon as money is available, it may be loaned out. The interest charged may not exceed 1% per month on the unpaid balance.

I believe that it would not be useful at this time to fully detail the operation after a credit union has commenced business. To give you a rough idea, applications for loans are passed upon by the Credit committee or loan officer. The Treasurer must keep accurate records which must be available for examination by your state licensing agency. The Treasurer must also make monthly reports to the Board of Directors and a yearly report at the credit union's annual membership meeting. Every three months the Auditing committee must make an independent examination of the books and records.

You must remember, of course, that you are running a business and are using the funds of your members to do it. Therefore, loans should be based upon sound business judgment.

There are many advantages to having your own credit union and only a few disadvantages. In the first place, it is an opportunity for those of us who are fighting to overcome a common problem to help one another. In addition in the past it has sometimes been impossible because of widespread discrimination for a blind per-

son to obtain a needed loan. Here he could borrow money without threat of discrimination.

Also the loan which could be made will likely be at a lesser rate of interest than could be secured through a bank and will certainly be more advantageous than any installment loan through a retailer. In this connection some people borrow money from a credit union to consolidate previously accumulated debts upon which a high rate of interest is being paid.

Discrimination in the purchase of life insurance has historically been a thorn in the side of the blind. There is automatic life insurance on each share account in a credit union up to a maximum of \$2,000. There are some specific differences depending upon the age of a person when he had purchased his shares, but generally speaking, a person would have 100% insurance coverage on his shares up to \$2,000. To illustrate, if a person had \$2,000 in his account and if he were to die, his estate would receive that \$2,000 plus an additional \$2,000 in insurance money. Recently, too, a double indemnity provision has become available. Under this provision, if a person were to die by accident, rather than by natural causes, and if he had \$2,000 worth of shares at the time of his death, his estate would receive \$3,000 in insurance money.

In addition, the death of each borrower is insured (at no additional cost to him) so that if he were to die his loan would be paid off at no expense to his family.

There is only one real disadvantage, and it is certainly not insurmountable. It is found in the very nature of our organiza-

tions. That is, our members are often spread throughout a wide area. To give you the other side of the coin, if employees of a large company were to form a credit union they would likely have their credit union office at the same location. Applications could be filled out on the spot, and there would be someone available to provide assistance. Board members are on the spot for meetings, and the Credit committee is readily available to pass upon loan applications.

We have to do much of this work by traveling to meetings, through correspondence, and by telephone, but as I have said, it can work and it has certainly been demonstrated that blind people are as

capable as anyone else of running a credit union both efficiently and profitably.

Our Iowa credit union has been in existence some three years. We now have deposits of approximately \$60,000 and are paying interest at the rate of 5½% compounded on a quarterly basis.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

James Omvig

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## THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION

by

Marion McDonald

On April 24, 1970 convention-goers from Harrisonburg, Hampton, Alexandria, Arlington, Annandale, Winchester, Charlottesville and other points of the Old Dominion, headed for Richmond--the capital of the state where our organization had its beginning in 1957. About a hundred members and friends were in attendance at the William Byrd Motor Hotel during the weekend.

Mr. Perry Sundquist of California, editor of *The Braille Monitor* and member of the NFB Executive Committee, represented the National Federation. His talk Saturday morning on "Virginia's Services for its Blind Citizens" caused our

four resolutions pertaining to aid to the Blind to be passed unanimously. These resolutions ask for (1) \$125.00 to be established as the Virginia minimum AB payment, with the statutory requirement that special needs of recipients be met fully; (2) all resources allowed or required to be exempt by federal law or federal regulation be exempt as available resource in determining the amount of the grant of a recipient of Aid to the Blind in Virginia; (3) a bill providing for acceleration of AB payments in accordance with the national cost of living index; and (4) repeal of relatives' responsibility in Virginia's Aid to Needy Blind program.

Our State Legislative program was ably guided to a successful close with Jimmy Nelson of Richmond as Chairman. Our fight that began in 1960 was rewarded when H.B. 501 was passed, eliminating the lien provision from the Aid to the Blind program. Our committee worked closely with the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped and appeared before the Finance Committee to urge funds for the construction of a Rehabilitation Adjustment Center. This bill was passed, and we hope construction will begin soon. Other bills passed were: an amendment to the voting law which makes it possible for a blind person to have an individual of his choice assist in the marking of an election ballot; a new act that provides that architectural barriers be eliminated in public buildings; a bill which would enable vending stand operators under supervision of the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped to pay only the amount of sales tax collected and collectable; and other bills on the vending stand program, education of blind children and the AB program.

"Employment Opportunities for the Blind," a panel program moderated by John Nagle, Chief of the Washington office of the NFB, was again well received. A stenographer, pianist and entertainer, prosecuting attorney, and transformer mechanic were the panelists. Jimmy Nelson led the convention in an active period of "What's on Your Mind?" The chapter reports were impressive and encouraging. Other interesting program items were: "Recent Advances in Sight-substitute Systems" by Dr. Keith McNeer, ophthalmologist; "Library Services for the Blind" by Vernon Marvel, Librarian, State Library for the Blind, and "The Visually Impaired Child in the Public Schools" by

Mrs. Christine Henns, Education Services, VCVH.

Mrs. Dorothea Foulkrod, President of the Virginia Federation of the Blind, presented a charter of affiliation to Mrs. Inez Wine, President of the Blue Ridge Federation of the Blind (Charlottesville) at the banquet Saturday evening. Mr. Perry Sundquist gave the banquet address with information of interest about the National Federation of the Blind movement. During hospitality and after the banquet our own members entertained, showing a variety of talent. Door prizes were numerous and exciting.

An interdenominational worship service was scheduled for Sunday morning, and it was so well attended that it will likely become a permanent item on our program.

Mrs. Ruth Drummond of Alexandria was appointed editor of the *VFB Newsletter*, assisted by Mrs. Marion McDonald. The convention voted to publish the *Newsletter* bi-monthly, and to begin putting it on cassettes for those who have difficulty reading their *Newsletter*.

Officers elected for the next two years are: President, Robert McDonald, Alexandria; 1st Vice-President, Mrs. Nancy Hoover, Harrisonburg; 2nd Vice-President, Mrs. Dorothea Foulkrod; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Marion McDonald; Corresponding Secretary, Miss Lydia Stuples, Richmond; Treasurer, James Copeland, Annandale; two-year Board Member, Billy Wine, Charlottesville; one-year Board Member, Mrs. Amy Barnes, Winchester.

Robert McDonald was elected delegate to the NFB convention, and Mrs.

Nancy Hoover is alternate.

The 1971 convention will be held in

Harrisonburg, and the 1972 convention will be hosted by our newest affiliate in Charlottesville.

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## MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION DOES IT AGAIN

by

Rosamond M. Critchley

Over the years, the happy relationship between the Associated Blind of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind has remained a shining example of how a state agency and the organized blind can work together. Here's the latest episode in the story:

Last fall at the semi-annual liaison meeting between members of the Commission and of the A.B.M., it was mentioned that the Commission had been conducting all-day seminars for staff members, volunteer groups, etc., to give an overall picture of what the agency is and does, and exactly what services it offers. The thought was expressed that blind people, who benefit from these services, might also be interested in attending such a seminar. John F. Mungovan, the Commissioner, was receptive to this idea and explained how it could be worked out. By making an appointment, any group of six or more could come to the Commission's headquarters in Boston and spend six hours, with a break for lunch, learning exactly how the Commission "ticks". However, by the time this information reached the chapters, the holiday season was upon us, and then winter set in, so nothing was done for several months.

First to take advantage of this new

opportunity was the Worcester Chapter, which set up an appointment for Wednesday, April 22nd. Through an arrangement with the local Parks and Recreation Commission, free bus transportation was arranged, and all blind people in the area, including nonmembers, were invited. A total of twenty-two made the trip.

In charge of the day's program was Lester W. Stott, Supervisor of Volunteers. In the course of the day, in addition to Mr. Stott and Mr. Mungovan, the group heard from the heads of the various departments, and received firsthand, up-to-date information concerning such services as aid to the blind, service to pre-school blind children, education, rehabilitation, home teaching, social service, and a new volunteer service which is now only in the first stages of development. An interesting sidelight was a talk by Philip Davis, an engineer who acts as the Commission's technical consultant, and who explained some of the new devices on which he is working. Some of those present had a chance to try their hands at an electric typewriter which had been connected to an I.B.M. Braille writer, enabling a typist with no knowledge of Braille to type a sheet and simultaneously produce an identical copy in Braille. By this means, blind persons who have difficulty in get-

ting print material read may now receive communications in Braille from the Commission. It will be uncontracted, and without capital signs, number signs, etc., but at least it can be read by touch.

All through the program, members of the audience fired questions at the speakers, and the give-and-take was lively and

interesting.

Members of the Commission and those attending felt that the session was most productive, and it is hoped by all concerned that other groups of blind residents of Massachusetts will find it possible to take advantage of this unusual opportunity.

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## FRUSTRATING EYE APPEAL

by

Susan Knight

[Editor's Note: The following correspondence is between Susan Knight of Illinois and President Jernigan.]

Dear Mr. Jernigan,

Several times in the last few months I have heard an appeal broadcast over Radio Station WBBM, Chicago, by the International Eye Foundation. The attitudes toward blindness expressed, though implicitly, in this appeal are contrary to those attitudes the Federation is trying to foster. The appeal begins with a remark to this effect: "Eye sight is one of our most precious possessions, and one of the most tragic to lose." The announcer goes on to speak of the "suffering blind millions". The work of the International Eye Foundation is then briefly described, and this closing appeal to public pity is made: "Your tax-deductible donation will help restore some of the world's fifteen million blind to a useful place in society." The attitudes implied are clear. Those who lose their sight are afflicted by such a grievous tragedy that they suffer for life. Only by providing money for research and medical

assistance, and only by donating eye tissue can we possibly hope to relieve the blind person's plight, since his handicap is so serious that he can't function in society. We don't believe this! This appeal goes out over one of the major stations in the nationwide CBS radio network, where millions hear it.

During the month of February I wrote a similar letter protesting this advertisement to the editor of *The Monitor*. I suggested that the Federation take a stand against such advertising and lodge a formal protest with the International Eye Foundation. Since I wrote that letter, the Women's Division of the Illinois Congress of the Blind collectively voiced the members' disapproval of this appeal. I am writing this to you in hopes that the Federation can do something.

Do you suggest we contact the International Federation of the Blind? Would it



be better for an individual like myself, or a state affiliate to contact this international body, or for the National Federation of the Blind to do so, thus expressing the feelings of the organized blind in the United States? Please send me the address of the person to whom I should write if there is value in my writing on behalf of my state affiliate. Can you suggest any

other courses of action? I feel that this type of charity appeal, fraught with its many implications, should be of concern to every blind person, and that we should take a stand against those organizations that undermine our efforts at public education and other activities to improve the quality of life for every blind person.

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### MONITOR MINIATURES

For the purposes of the Pennsylvania Federation of the Blind, the State is divided into four regions--Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Western. Each region is made up of chapters of the P.F.B. in that locality. The first of four regional seminars was held in April for the Northeastern Region. The second, third, and fourth were held in May. Jim Omvig, rehabilitation specialist with the Iowa Commission for the Blind, represented the NFB at the first two sessions. John Nagle, Chief of the NFB's Washington Office, represented the national organization at the last two. Both Jim and John gave excellent talks on Federationism. This was the first time in many years that representatives of the NFB have attended functions of the Pennsylvania Federation of the Blind.

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For eleven years now the American Telephone & Telegraph Company has issued its annual report in Braille and on recordings, for the benefit of its blind stockholders. Of the more than 3 million AT&T shareowners, many thousands now

receive the Braille and recorded versions of the Company's annual report.

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The Montana Association for the Blind recently approved an application for a charter for its ninth official chapter. The new affiliate is the Capital City Chapter of Helena. This group has been organized as a social club for several years but has only now become an official chapter of the MAB. The charter will be presented at the banquet during the 25th anniversary convention of the MAB in July.

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A recent edition of the Federal Register contains a proposed regulation entitled Special Services for the Blind and provides that special services for the blind (receiving public assistance) may include training in mobility, personal care, home management, and communication skills; arranging for talking book machines, and arranging for provision of special aids and appliances and safety features, particularly those

necessary to assure safe housing and prevention of accidents. By July 1, 1973, state plans must provide for special services for the blind.

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Clarence E. Collins, President of the Tar Heel State Federation of the Blind (North Carolina), in a recent progress report stated that when they organized in August of last year, there were persons who predicted that the organization would last two or three months at most and then would fade away. After eight months of operation, the organization is stronger than ever and growing every month. In April, ten of the members went to Greensboro and helped organize the Gate City Federation of the Blind. There are plans to organize another chapter in Winston-Salem. Plans are going forward for the State Convention to be held in Charlotte in September.

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The U. S. Department of Labor's Wage-Hour Division reports that during the last half of 1969, investigations disclosed that almost double the clients was found underpaid, and a tripling of underpayments as compared with the same period in 1968. Some 2,000 workshop clients were found underpaid \$336,000. Sheltered workshop certificates are issued to permit payment of minimum wage rates below those set by the Fair Labor Standards Act to handicapped workers who are unable to earn the minimum wage due to physical or mental disabilities. There are presently 1,329 sheltered workshops in the country holding certificates from the Wage and Hour Division. Approximately 65,000 handicapped workers were

employed in these shops. The Labor Department feels that its findings clearly reveal the continuing need for vigilance in order to assure that workshop clients receive proper wages and to prevent workshops from competing unfairly with regular industry.

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The I.A.B. *Bulletin*, publication of the Iowa Association of the Blind, reports the formation of its newest local chapter, the Northwest Iowa Association of the Blind.

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The Bwafwano Blind Music Club in Ndola, Zambia, Africa, has asked for musical instruments including guitars, banjos, bass guitars and drums. The group would also be interested in hearing from other music clubs. For additional information, write to: G. K. Chansa, Secretary, Bwafwano Blind Music Club, P. O. Box 1843, Ndola, Zambia, Africa.

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The Kansas Association for the Blind, in its last Convention in Topeka, instructed the Prevention of Blindness Committee to study various aspects of blindness, particularly hereditary blindness. The Committee sent letters to ophthalmologists and optometrists in Kansas, suggesting that they alert their patients in regard to the implications of hereditary blindness and what this would mean to their offspring. The response from the doctors was most gratifying.

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The President of the International Federation of the Blind, Rienzi Alagiya-wanna, recently visited the State Capitol in Sacramento, California, where he was invited to address the Assembly of the State Legislature. Rienzi then journeyed on down to Stockton to attend the Spring Convention of the California Council of the Blind. He was made an honorary member of the Council in recognition of his service in behalf of the blind of all nations.

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Governor Robert E. McNair of South Carolina recently signed into law a bill which authorizes the Board of Directors of the Association of the Blind of South Carolina to convey to the South Carolina Commission for the Blind real estate leased to the Association by the State. Thus another significant milestone in legislation for the blind has been achieved in South Carolina.

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Fuji Seisakusho Ltd. of Tokushima, Japan has brought out its Watani electric Braille typewriter. One can type both Braille and roman letters simultaneously. Thus a sighted person can send letters in Braille to the blind even if he does not know how to write letters in Braille. Similarly, he can send letters in roman to his sighted friends.

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Floyd D. Mohler of Kansas City, Missouri died recently. He is survived by his wife, Helen, who is the newly-elected Treasurer of the Progressive Blind of Missouri. Floyd was born in Kansas City and received his schooling there. He worked in

the area, lost his sight about twenty-five years ago through a gunshot accident, and was active in the work of the organized blind movement. He and Helen were charter members of the Progressive Blind of Missouri.

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Elmer Chapson, a member of the Alameda County (California) Club of Adult Blind, recently visited an Orientation Center for the Blind in southern Sweden. This was but one of Sweden's five orientation centers, which is a goodly number since the entire country has a total population of only seven million. This particular center is designed to meet the needs of recently blinded women and had 40 pupils. The average stay is nine months. It has a very complete homemaking department, and the students are encouraged to live in their own apartments and do their own cooking and managing. The courses offered are similar to those given at orientation centers in this country. The number one cause of blindness among young people in Sweden is diabetes.

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Forty blind farmers, trained at a rural center in Malaysia, have been resettled in various parts of the country. In another center in that distant land, about 70 blind persons, both men and women, have been trained in farming and resettled. The training centers point out that it is not enough to just give these blind farmers land, tools, seed and chickens, but a careful follow-up must be had to assist in overcoming problems which may crop up.

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The Ohio Council of the Blind held its 1970 seminar in Columbus. The late Al Smith, recently-deceased President of the Council, asked for rededication to the blind movement. The NFB representative was John Taylor, Deputy Director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, who urged the creation of a separate Commission for the Blind in Ohio rather than having services for the blind scrambled with those for other handicapped groups.

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Governor Ronald Reagan of California has had introduced into the Legislature a bill which would effect cutbacks in welfare. The bill has raised a storm of protests from all over the State and it seems probably at this writing that the measure will be defeated in its present form.

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The U. S. Supreme Court ruled by a 6 to 2 vote that States may not reduce welfare payments automatically on the presumption that a needy family is receiving some income from an unrelated "man in the house." This was the last in a series of welfare cases in this term of the Court—a term in which the Court has declared that recipients are entitled to a hearing before losing their benefits and are entitled to a realistic cost-of-living adjustment under federal law. The Court also held that States may limit the amount of benefits a family may receive even if it reduces the amount allotted to a child in a large family.

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The first issue of *Beehive Bulletin*, the Voice of the Utah State Association of

the Blind, has been issued. It is designed to enable the blind of Utah to keep more closely in touch with each other's activities. The *Beehive Bulletin* in its first issue deals in detail with the highly successful seminar held in Salt Lake City on the subject of employment of the blind. *The Braille Monitor* salutes the Utah State Association for its initiative in beginning publication of its own magazine.

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The President of the Indian Federation of the Blind advises us that physically handicapped persons, including the blind, will hereafter be included in the priority list for employment in State Government jobs. They have already been accorded priority for consideration against vacancies in the Central Government Offices of India. Thus comes to fruition one of the long and difficult drives of the Indian Federation of the Blind.

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A new concept of laser-light treatment is being used at Stanford University (Palo Alto, California) to treat patients who face blindness because of eye disease. Some eleven different eye diseases have been treated in this manner, including diseases of the retina, especially those occurring in diabetes; Eales' disease, in which eye blood vessels grow abnormally and bleed easily; and several congenital conditions. Investigation to assess the advantages and results of the new technique is continuing.

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Through the close cooperation of the National Federation of the Blind, the

Selective Placement Division of the Civil Service Commission, and the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress, the Federal Service Entrance Examination will soon be available on tape cassettes. The examination material will occupy both tracks of a C90 cassette which can be played on any of the standard cassette machines, such as those distributed by the Library of Congress and its affiliated regional libraries. Applicants will have a choice of using the cassette recording to take the exam or of asking the Civil Service Commission to provide a reader. Applicants are encouraged to use the cassette version to reduce the possibility of poor test results as a consequence of the assignment of an inadequate reader. The cassette recording of the examination may not be available in your area of the country right away, but if you wish to use the cassette indicate that fact on your application. Applicants will be expected to arrange for their own cassette machine. Your regional library should be able to provide one.

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The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and Pilot International, a classified service club for business and professional women executives, join forces to select the Handicapped Woman of the Year. This award is for overcoming a particular major handicap and for active participation in the betterment of the community. Miss Pauline Gomez of Santa Fe was selected for the honor covered by District 9 of Pilot International, which includes clubs from Denver south to El Paso and Juarez. Miss Gomez, a former President of the New Mexico Federation of the Blind, is active in the National Federation of the Blind at

local, state and national levels and has successfully owned and operated Los Ninos Kindergarten. The final winner will be announced at the Pilot International Convention in Miami this July.

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A cane which uses laser beams to detect obstacles in the path of the blind is being tested at Western Michigan University. The cane was developed by J. Malvern Benjamin of Bionic Instruments, Inc., in Philadelphia, and the project was financed by the Veterans Administration. The cane uses three light beams which bounce off the obstacles in their paths. One detects low-lying objects and can be adjusted to a range of twelve feet; it signals the user with a low-pitched beep. A second beam detects large objects or persons in the path of the user and signals him by a mechanism which tickles his right index finger. A third beam warns of obstacles at head level, such as overhanging branches, by a high-pitched beep.

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Chairman James M. Copeland reported to the convention of the Virginia Federation of the Blind the successful completion of their White Cane Safety Day publicity campaign. Robert and Marion McDonald had printed and distributed 22,000 brochures for the use of the Virginia Federation's local chapters. Mrs. Ruth Drummond, chairman for the Potomac chapter, reported that the brochures were distributed by Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops and that the Mayor of Alexandria issued a proclamation which received full newspaper coverage. Publicity in church bulletins and on radio stations was also obtained. Chairman Bill Oakley



of the Richmond Area Federation reported television, radio and newspaper publicity as well as the distribution of brochures and copies of the President's proclamation. Mrs. Nancy Hoover, chairman of the Skyline Federation's campaign, reported distribution of proclamations and brochures by Ruritan Clubs and publicity in church bulletins. Chairman Amy Barnes of the Winchester Association reported proclamations by the Mayors of Winchester and Berkley Springs, West Virginia, with newspaper coverage which included a picture of her using the white cane. The Virginia Federation made excellent use of this opportunity for acquainting the public with the use of the white cane and the activities of the federation.

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John Wark of the Lawrence Massachusetts *Eagle Tribune* writes about three employees of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company who have developed an "audio ball" for use by blind children. Spurgeon W. Smith, Philo R. Dewing, and Thomas J. Murphy, members of the Telephone Pioneers of America, worked on the project in their spare time, using their own funds and donations of equipment. The ball contains a battery powered electrical device which emits beeps that can be heard even in flight.

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The Mid-American Conference of Rehabilitation Teachers will hold its 1970 biennial convention on July 21 and 22, preceding the AAWB Regional in Little Rock, Arkansas. at the Hotel Marian. Any person involved or interested in the field of rehabilitation teaching is invited to attend this convention and is eligible for membership in the Conference. Membership dues are only ten dollars for two years, and they may be submitted to Mrs. Kathryn Viskant, 938 Ontario, Oak Park, Illinois 60302.

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Robert J. Smithdas, deaf-blind author, poet and lecturer, received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., in recognition of his contributions to the betterment of all handicapped persons. Smithdas is the Community Education Director for the National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults. He is the author of several books of poetry and an autobiography *Life at My Figertips*. He is a member of the Poetry Society of America and a fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters.



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